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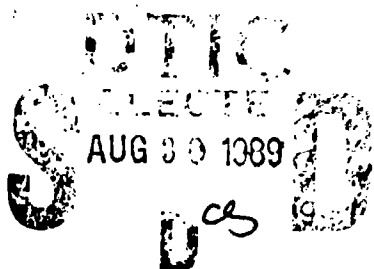
Should Members of the Military be Concerned  
about Television News Coverage of Military Operations?

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A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command  
and General Staff College in partial fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the  
Degree

Master of Military Art and Science

By  
Larry Watson, MAJ, USA  
B.S., Florida A&M University, 1977



Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
1989

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## ABSTRACT

SHOULD MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY BE CONCERNED ABOUT TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS?, by Major Larry Watson, USA, 166, pages.

This study provides a historical perspective of how the press was controlled during war before television became a major news source. It provides background on the nature of television as a news medium and identifies controls setup to ensure fairness in television news broadcast. These controls are explained to show actions taken to prevent the networks from exploiting their perceived power. The study examines significant events in 1968, during the Vietnam War. It shows how they were covered by the television networks. It seeks to show how a credibility gap formed between the military and the press. The study then points out some efforts taken since Vietnam to improve the military media relationship.

Among the many conclusions which could be drawn from this study are: (1) Television coverage of the war in 1968 was biased; (2) The credibility gap lead to the hostile relationship between the military and the press; (3) There was a breakdown in the unity of command in the executive and legislative branches of the federal government and (4) though the impact is not fully identified herein, television influenced the decline of a president.

The study concludes that members of the military should be concerned about television coverage of wartime operations. The concern should be over the possibility of biased and distorted coverage or manipulation of film footage on the national and international levels.

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The basis of national power in the United States rests on three fundamental elements of the democratic system. These elements are the executive and legislative branches of the federal government and the public. These elements come together to form the will of the nation. This will is used to project United States policies and influence in international affairs. It is the unified will of these elements that determines actions to be taken when international policies are violated and national security is threatened. If force is the method chosen to display the national will, the military is the organization that handles the mission.

The military provides the force needed to wage war should deterrence fail. It carries out this mission by providing forces around the world and by executing and enforcing the national policies of the United States. The military has the ultimate mission of deterring war and provides the forces needed to wage war should deterrence fail. War is a national undertaking which must be coordinated from the highest level of policy making to the basic level of execution.<sup>1</sup>

When the decision is made to go to war the military is prepared with the men and weaponry to do so. The use of the military to enforce national policy comes only when

deterrence and the political process break down. Karl von Clausewitz, a noted military theorist, pointed out that the political objective (the original motive for war) will determine the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort to direct toward the war.<sup>2</sup> This point is key to the military which has to translate political objectives into military objectives at the operational and tactical levels. This translation of objectives seek to develop a strategy to achieve political ends through military means.

The military serves as an arm of the executive branch of government and receives direction and guidance through official channels from that office. Congress and the President have a direct channel of communication on the issues of war. The American people, even though they elect members of Congress to represent them, do not have a channel of open exchange with Congress or the President. The link that does exist in the United States is the press. The institution called the press serves as a conduit to the public for information concerning national and international policy. It is through this institution that the executive and legislative branches make their position known on policy matters. The press presents the issues in a way to inform the public, which results in the public expressing its approval or disapproval.

The Congress, as a representative voice of the people, then interacts with the president to express the will of the

people. The press serves as a medium that links the views of the people, Congress, and the President. Each of their views affect the armed forces' ability to fight during war, therefore the press is vital in the exchange process among the people, Congress, and the President. Congress play a critical role in relations with to the military. Congress has the power to declare war, raise, fund, and regulate the military forces.

If the voice of the people is misinterpreted when presented to Congress, or the voice of Congress does not reach the people, the democratic system breaks down. The press must provide information from all levels of government from which the public is informed. This gives the press great power and responsibility. The press, in the way it informs the people, can shape public opinion. Of this ability Abraham Lincoln once stated "With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions."<sup>3</sup> Examination of this statement will show that the lawmakers, the executive, and the press must interact effectively.

During war, the press informs the people of the effectiveness of the military in the performance of its duty. The military exercises operational secrecy as a means of achieving its goals until after the battles are over. Secrecy and surprise are valid principles in waging war. In

American society these elements are often challenged by the press. While the military must operate at times under a veil of secrecy to achieve its objectives, the press is not so restrained. The press, by its role as a monitor and in its effort to inform, operates in an environment of openness. The differences between the press and the military in achieving their ends brings them into direct opposition.

The effect that the press has had in the presentation of past wars has proven to be important. During the Vietnam War, technology had changed the methods of reporting due to the rise of television. Many attribute the United States' lack of success in Vietnam to how the television networks reported the war. President Lyndon B. Johnson expressed his concern for television reporting in this quote made to the National Association of Broadcasters in April 1968.

As I sat in my office last evening, waiting to speak, I thought of the many times each week when television brings the war into the American home. No one can say exactly what effect those vivid scenes have on American opinion. Historians must only guess at the effect television would have had during earlier conflicts on the future of this Nation: during the Korean war, for example, at that time when our forces were pushed back there to Pusan; or World War II, the Battle of the Bulge, or when our men were slugging it out in Europe or when most of our Air Force was shot down that day in June 1944 off Australia.<sup>4</sup>

There was great validity in President Johnson's words, and in fact, the issue has not yet been fully assessed. The purpose of this study is to answer the question; "Should members of the military be concerned about television news coverage of military operations?"

Traditionally, as a monitor of the government, the press has sought to expose all issues it felt the government was trying to conceal. The general feeling by the press was that this was okay in all cases except during open and declared war.<sup>5</sup> This attitude of the press demanding unlimited freedom could embarrass the nation or directly affect national security, as with the release of the Pentagon Papers. The American press, radio and television are no longer merely national institutions catering to a national audience. Like the rest of American big business, they are distributing their services all over the world.<sup>6</sup> The services provided abroad by the media paint the international picture of America and reflect the American way of thinking.

#### BACKGROUND

The news media have played a role in the American way of life since colonial times. They are a key contributor in presenting to the public accounts of events as they happen and become historical record. The methods in reporting underwent rapid changes during the early 1900's. Technological advancements such as the use of steam and electricity as power sources caused the evolution of reporting methods. Methods of reporting news moved from rotary press to radio to television. With each threshold of advancement came new and more rapid means of informing the public of news events. Each advancement improved the speed and quantity of distribution of the events being reported. In a growing

country the news served as a link to keep the people informed. This role of the news media allowed reporters to capitalize on their ability to affect the American people. In a government ruled by the people and informed by the press, it can be argued that the state of the nation is placed in the hands of those with the responsibility to inform.

The press has established itself as a viable force in America. It inspires people and rallies them for or against a cause. Press coverage of the sinking of the Lusitania and the bombing of Pearl Harbor inspired the American people to support involvement in World War I and World War II, respectively. The power of the news media grew on a parallel line with technology. The government recognized the power of the press and sought methods to control it. Controls to keep the press in balance proved to be a delicate undertaking, because the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States stood in the way. The press has the right to inform the people; however, during time of war this right, unabated, could damage the security of the nation.

When applied to reporting events and policies about national security and interests of the United States during conflict, responsible coverage becomes a very critical issue. Censorship was the device used to curtail the power and influence of the press in modern war. President Wilson, in April 1917, established the Committee on Public

Information. This committee drew up a voluntary censorship code under which editors would agree to refrain from publishing information that could aid the enemy. The Espionage Act, Sedition Act, and the Trading with the Enemy Act were laws passed to prevent attacks on the government during the conduct of war.

Early methods of reporting news events were slow and presented by still life display in black and white. These early methods allowed events to undergo a cooling off period before reaching the American people. After the Korean War, technology increased the speed of reporting news events to the public.

Television, with its graphic clarity and audience appeal, took the role of showing Americans the world as seen through the eye of a motion picture camera. The romantic attitude of the public toward motion pictures strengthened television's appeal and, power to influence. Television, as a means of covering conflict does, however, have its negative points. First, as a visual medium, it shows the horrors of war in a way print cannot. It cannot deal effectively with politics or strategy, with the resulting effect that war appears to be senseless killing.

After World War II, television coverage was to journalism what the atomic bomb was to warfighting. It could be viewed as highly destructive or a necessary good, based on which side it's viewed from. The appeal of television and

its ability to present visible near realtime events to the public would strengthen its ability to affect the emotions, attitudes, and views of the public. Couple this appeal with incomplete or biased reporting, and the impact could prove detrimental.

John Mueller presents evidence that showed an all time drop in the American public's support for the Vietnam War, in 1968.<sup>7</sup> There is a general belief that if members of the public are presented information on an issue they will be prone to take a position. This belief is not supported by Mueller's data. The number of respondents with no opinion remains relatively constant from February 1967 to April 1970. During this period the difference in the largest and smallest percentage is only six percent.

Dissension was prevalent at all levels of American society. Leaders in the Federal government spoke out against the hostility. Civic leaders voiced their opposition to national policy. Students marched in protest, while some fled the country rather than fight in a so called unjust war. Appendix A reflects some sources of opposition as seen on the news networks. An interesting thing to note about the data presented is the position of the sources. Those voicing opposition were Republican and Democratic doves, domestic Communists, far left organizations, politically unidentified students and soldiers, pacifists, and network reporters. The focus of opposition was either an attack on the national

command authority, the military effort, or on the injustice of the war.

In 1968, the United States no longer stood united. Congress was filled with members of opposing views. Men very close to the President expressed opposing views to those presented by the executive. Clark Clifford, the Secretary of Defense, and Harry McPherson, Counsel to the President, conspired in almost a mutiny type manner. In the PBS film series, "Vietnam: A Television History," McPherson recalls a dialogue with Clifford.

Clifford said, "I noticed you this afternoon at the State Department and it seems to me you and I are on the same side. And I think we should form a partnership. You should be the partner in the White House and I'll be the partner in the Pentagon. You tell me what goes on over there that you hear, and I'll tell you what happens here, and together we'll get this country and our President out of this mess."<sup>9</sup>

When it was evident that the President did not share Clifford's views, he put forth the question in his group, "Is he with us?,"<sup>9</sup> meaning the President. The credibility of the official position on the war was shaken by division at the highest level. The element that linked national perception to the war effort was the media, mostly through the medium of television. Could this one link have caused the breakdown in national support of the war effort? Could it have interfered with the Army's effort to achieve its military goals? It did not seem possible for one of the world's most powerful nations to be defeated by a small

underdeveloped country. Yet, this was the perception in 1968 that Americans were being presented in most television broadcasts.

The effect of news coverage leading to America's involvement in the early wars of this century proved that the press could stimulate Americans. The press was used to publicize the purpose for America's war involvement. Events such as the sinking of the Lusitania (WWI) and the bombing of Pearl Harbor were used to excite the American public into going to war. News headlines became public battle cries. Familiar headlines such as 'Remember Pearl Harbor' or 'Remember the Maine' inspired the American public to rally in support of the country at war. Carefully organized newsreels and reports presented to the American public promoted the national and military effort. Government propagandists were used during World War II to convince radio listeners that the United States was right in fighting the war. The Treasury Star Parade<sup>10</sup> was a series of approximately three hundred fifteen-minute programs designed to sell war bonds and America's involvement in World War II. Other films such as 'The Army Hour' and 'Soldiers with Wings' served to arouse public emotion and create a positive military image throughout the war. They also served to boost American pride. The nation became united behind the reports released through the media.

Every American was motivated to believe it was his patriotic duty to fight for the American cause. Popular appeal was to sign up and support the national cause. Those who served came home to parades and fanfare. The press during the early wars worked hand-in-hand with the military effort.

During the Vietnam conflict, things were different for those who served. This was in part because Vietnam was not a constitutionally declared war and neither was it a declared police action with United Nations approval. The American public gradually became aware of the war in Vietnam. It was a war entered into without open debate, popular comprehension of the issues, motives or consequences.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, these issues were debated while the country was in fact engaged in a war. The press in the early stages of the war sought to tell the story but met with difficulties due to the official reports being given by the executive branch. The attempt by leaders in Washington to conceal what was happening in Vietnam and the escalating involvement of American forces also affected how the war was presented. There were few headlines supporting U.S. involvement in the war.

Early coverage of the Vietnam War was positive and in most cases reflected the official reports from Washington. Correspondents were covering the war with a style similar to that used in early wars. By 1968, as the credibility gap

between the press and government widened, many correspondents shifted coverage in an effort to reduce the credibility gap and tell the Vietnam story as seen from the ground. The effort shifted towards dispelling the optimistic official reports. The attitude of optimist versus pessimist was the root of the adversarial relationship that existed during the war. The tension created due to opposing attitudes would taint the military/press relationship. The tension continued even after the war ended.

The news coverage provided the American public affected the nation and the ability of the military to fight a sustained, unpopular war. This is not to say that the public alone reacted to the news. The leaders of the nation watched the news and were affected by its contents. It was not solely what was presented in the news that affected most leaders but the perceptions that the public was against the war, along with the conflict in official and press stories. Congress, in whose hands rested the fate of the military on a battlefield, was filled with members who spoke out against the war. The data displayed in Appendix A, provides evidence that members of Congress spoke out openly against the war.

#### Assumptions.

(1) The United States will be involved in hostile conflict in the future.

(2) Technology will continue to improve the speed and clarity of presenting news events to the public.

(3) Television will continue to be a major source of news reporting.

(4) The public depends heavily on television as a means of receiving the news.

(5) Reporters will continue to cover military operations during involvement in hostile conflicts.

(6) The American public places some confidence in the accuracy of reports broadcast on news programs.

(7) Issues that influence the decision making process at any level of the military organization impact on subordinate elements in focusing on objectives in keeping with the higher level's intent.

#### Definition of Terms.

(1) Censorship: prohibition or suppression of release of information deemed objectionable or possibly damaging to a cause.

(2) Military strategy: the art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation or alliance to secure policy objectives by the application or threat of force.

(3) National will: a dynamic element of national power that in the United States exists at three levels: public will, congressional will, and executive will.

(4) Near realtime reporting: the ability of the news media to report events to the public at a time during or close to their actual occurrence.

(5) Operational art: the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations.

(6) Policy: patterns of actions designed to attain specific objectives.

(7) Propaganda: information or ideas methodically spread to promote or injure a cause, group or nation.

(8) Scooping: the efforts of one reporter or news agency to be first in presenting a news event to the public.

(9) Tactics: the art by which units smaller than corps translate potential combat power into victorious battles and engagements.

(10) War: a major armed conflict between nations or between organized parties within a state and in the United States it is the legislative body of the federal government.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides a historical perspective of the military and press relationship during war. It focuses on television coverage of the Vietnam War during the year 1968. Key events from that year will be examined to assess television coverage and its effect on the United States' ability to reach a favorable conclusion to the war. It is not the intent of this study to attack television news coverage. The study seeks to show a relationship between the press and the military during war. The military executes the

mechanics of war while the press presents the purpose and progress of the war to the public. By showing a relationship between the two, this study examines the need for a better understanding of organizational operations between the press and military. Through this understanding each organization can then operate and meet its goals without having a detrimental effect to the other.

#### ENDNOTES

1. The decision to go to war is a reflection of the national will. This is a unified focus of will and resolve in the executive and legislative branches of government along with that of the American people. This focus of will in past international conflicts proved to be a powerful weapon in the Arsenal of Democracy. It can be argued, that if will at either of these levels, is flawed then there will be an impact to the military in executing its mission during war. The President must act, in his two roles as national leader and commander in chief of the military to rally the people's support and provide clear objectives for the military. Congress is vested with the power to raise and fund the military along with issuing a declaration of war. The people must be in support of the leaders efforts or as in a democracy their protest will be directed upon the leadership. Without public support any war effort by a democratic nation to wage war will be hampered.

2. Michael Howard, editor, Karl von Clausewitz: On War, 1976, p.81.

3. Ernest W. Lefever, TV and National Defense: An Analysis of CBS News, 1972-1973, 1974, p.v.

4. Daniel C. Hallin, The "Uncensored War" The Media and Vietnam, 1986, p.104.

5. Vietnam was not a declared war and this fact can be asserted to explain the attitudes and behavior of the news networks in covering it.

6. James Reston, The Artillery of the Press "Its Influence on American Foreign Policy, 1967, p.20.

7. John E. Mueller, "Trends in Popular Support For the War in Korea and Vietnam, American Political Science Review, (June 1971), p.363. Mueller's investigation into the trends associated with the wars in Korea and Vietnam was part of a project supported by the National Science Foundation. When he prepared this article he was employed by the University of Rochester. Data used in this article were made available by the Roper Public Opinion Research Center.

8. Vietnam: Vietnam: A Television History, 1987, Data viewed in part 7: Tet, the Dialogue can be found on page 12 of the transcript of the tape.

9. Vietnam: part 7: (Tet) page 13 of the tapes transcript.

10. Fred J. MacDonald, Television and the Red Menace: The Video Road to Vietnam, 1985, p.7.

11. MacDonald, p.169.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review is provided to familiarize the reader with the material used in conducting this study. The literature used consisted of books, periodicals and films. The primary source of the research material was the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) at the United States Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. All material used was unclassified. The material used in this study covers two subject areas, broadcast journalism, and the Vietnam War. The material on broadcast journalism comes from a varied group of intellectual experts in that area and is considered to be primary sources. Secondary sources comprise a large portion of the research source. The strength of the data presented by these sources rests on their professional credibility. This review does not cover all of the material in the bibliography, and only those that are significant to this study are summarized.

Valerie Adams' work The Media and the Falklands Campaign was published by St. Martin's Press. Ms Adams is a specialist in defense and arms control issues. She spent ten years in the British Ministry of Defense before joining the Department of War Studies, King's College, London. In addition to her research of the handling of the media in the Falklands conflict, she has published articles on chemical and biological subjects, arms control, and logistic support

for the Falklands campaign. In her book she critiques media coverage of the Falklands campaign. The book explores the issues raised in wartime concerning the relationship among the media, the government and the public in a democracy. Adams provides a critique of the media's use of nonmilitary strategists to interpret and speculate about military operations. The book provided some insight on how another democratic form of government handled the press in a wartime situation.

Michael J. Arlen is the author of Living Room War, which was first published by Viking Press in 1969. This book contains a collection of essays written by Arlen for the New Yorker. Those essays that were useful were: Morley Safer's Vietnam; Living Room War; Television's War; Television and the Press in Vietnam; or, Yes I can hear you very well - just what was it you were saying?, and Propaganda. These essays provided Arlen's views on various aspects of television coverage of the Vietnam War.

Andrew Arno and Wimal Dissanayake edited The News Media in National and International Conflict. Dr. Arno is a former research associate at the East-West Center. He holds advanced degrees in social anthropology and law and has taught at the City University of New York and the University of Rhode Island. Dr. Dissanayake is a research associate at the Institute of Culture and Communication and coordinator of the Humanities Forum at the East-West center. He is

consulting and contributing editor to the Journal of Communication. The book is a Westview Special Study containing many works. This study looks at the media and its impact on the people of the different nations of the world during conflict. It explores the various roles played and ways the media (newspaper, radio and television) are involved in conflict situations. Conflicts between the United States and various nations provided various situations from which the authors could examine the relationship among government, news media and the public. The sections of this book that were used in this study are: Conflict as News, Is Less Communication Better, Television in International Conflicts and the News Media Third Parties in National and International Conflict. These sections provide background and insight into the impact, role and value of the news media in covering international conflict. Since Vietnam was an international conflict, the book provided some key points on which news coverage could be evaluated.

Marvin Barrett edited Survey of Broadcast Journalism which was published by Grosset and Dunlap. This book is the third in a series of surveys on broadcast journalism. It covers the period 1970 to 1971. There are three issues in broadcast journalism covered in the book. They are: the Bias of Television, the Fairness Doctrine and Women in Broadcasting. It also contains the full text of "The Selling of the Pentagon", which was a CBS broadcast on the publicity

and public relations efforts of the Pentagon. This was a very informative book on the element of bias in news coverage and efforts to curtail that bias.

Peter Braestrup's book Big Story was published by Westview Press in cooperation with Freedom House. Braestrup's book consists of two volumes. Braestrup served as a correspondent in Vietnam for both the New York Times and the Washington Post. In 1968, he served as the Saigon bureau chief for the Washington Post. At the time the book was published he was editor of publications for the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars at the Smithsonian. This book was used because of its analysis on how the Tet Offensive of 1968 was covered by television news. The book also examines the impact that television had on the leaders in Washington. It further points to some of the difficulties faced by the press in reporting a complex situation.

Battle Lines is a book outlining the Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force in its examination of the press and military relationship during war. The Task Force has thirteen members from differing professional backgrounds. A full list of members is at appendix B. The task force reexamined the history of the relationship between the press and the military over the past four decades. This examination was to develop the roles of the two based on historical truth. The book provided information for making a comparison of military/ press relations from World War II

through Grenada. This book also presented similar analysis of how Britain dealt with the press in the Falklands War.

Robert W. Crawford's work Call Retreat "The Johnson Administration's Vietnam Policy March 1967 to March 1968" was published by the Washington Institute for Values in Public Policy. Crawford is a defense analyst with Systems Research and Application Corporation. He specializes in developing crisis management systems for the Office of the Secretary of Defense and is a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise support program. He holds an M.A. in Security Policy Studies. This book provided insight on the changing strategy within the Johnson Administration. It also points out how policies and strategy had split the leaders in Washington.

Clark Dougan and Stephen Weiss are the authors of The Vietnam Experience Nineteen Sixty-Eight. Clark Dougan is a former Watson and Danforth fellow and has taught history at Keynon College. Stephen Weiss is an American historian, with M.A. and M. Phil. degrees from Yale. He has coauthored other volumes in the Vietnam Experience series. This book contained information of the Tet Offensive and how it was carried out. It provided data on the war and public opinion from 1965 to 1968. It also related the impact television news coverage of the Tet Offensive had on the leaders and the people of America.

Edith Efron is the author of The News Twisters. She is a writer whose works have appeared in many major

magazines. She worked as a staff writer for TV Guide for ten years. Her authoritative analyses of the politic-riddled networks have appeared as source material in everything from college texts to doctoral dissertation. This book provided an analysis on the bias of the television news networks. By examining the content of network news coverage the author was able to point out continuous violations of the Fairness Doctrine. Among the subjects examined were Vietnam and the bias coverage presented on the war in 1968.

Edwin Emery and Michael Emery are the authors of The Press and America "An Interpretative History of the Mass Media 4th Edition. This book served as good background information on the evolution of the press. It also dealt with the impact of technology on the news industry. The book was a good historical source for tracing the growth, use and developing power of the press.

Edward J. Epstein is the author of Between Fact and Fiction: The Problem of Journalism. This book contained an analysis of television news coverage on Vietnam from 1967-1973. In his analysis of transcripts of nightly news coverage Epstein identified the different periods that marked shifts in coverage during the war. Epstein also points out in this book how network executives viewed their role in informing the public by showing them the war.

Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn Young, and H. Bruce Franklin are the authors of Vietnam and America: A

Documented History. This book provides a complete history of the United States involvement in Vietnam. The story is told through a collection of essays by key individual participants, subject matter experts and data from original source material. This book provides information pertinent to events surrounding the Tonkin Gulf incident, the Tet Offensive and the release of the Pentagon Papers. The chapter titled "The Decisive Year, 1968" proved valuable information on events that took place that year. The presentation by General Westmoreland provides excellent first-hand information on the events of 1968. Marvin E. Gettleman is Professor of History at Polytechnic Institute of New York and editor of a bestselling book on Vietnam, titled Vietnam: History, Documents and Opinions. Jane Franklin is a researcher who has prepared many educational materials on Vietnam. Marilyn Young is a Professor of History at New York University and H. Bruce Franklin is a Professor of English at Rutgers University.

David C. Hallin is the author of The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam. This book provides a very detailed analysis on what Americans read and watched about Vietnam. Hallin focuses on the different stages of news coverage of the Vietnam War. He also deals with the relationship between the press and government in presenting the Vietnam War to the public.

Juergen Arthur Heise is the author of Minimum Disclosure. This book examines the relationship between the Pentagon and the press and how each differs on the issue of informing the public. The book deals with the operation of the Pentagon's information machine and how information is released or barred from release to the public.

Alan Hooper is the author of The Military and the Media. The author is a member of the British Royal Marines and his book deals with the press and military of his country. Because America has a democratic form of government similar to Britain many of the problems encountered between the military and the press are the same. This book provided insight and understanding on how the press and the military can operate in a free society without being adversaries. Though many of the author's views concern developments in the press/military relationship in Britain, they can easily be applied to the U.S. military. This book provides very good information from a military viewpoint on the operations of the media.

Doris Kearns in Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream, traces the political life of this ex-President from 1931 through 1968. She presents information to explain how Johnson's beliefs were formed. These deeply ingrained beliefs are then displayed in the many situations that faced Johnson during his presidency. She provides a chapter in the book on Vietnam. In this chapter, she provides insight on

how Johnson was affected by the news, the public and the Vietnam War.

Phillip Knightley's book The First Casualty, chronicles the media coverage of wars dating from 1854 to 1975. In tracing media coverage of many different wars this book provides the background that set the stage for reporting in Vietnam. In his chapter on Vietnam he relates some of the issues that divided the press, the military and the leaders in Washington. It must be pointed out that the book relates things from the point of view of a London correspondent.

TV and National Defense: An Analysis of CBS News, 1972-1973 by Ernest W. Lefever is a study on how CBS performed in covering national defense and foreign policy. The study had its main focus on how the Fairness Doctrine was being applied by CBS to its coverage. The book seeks to answer one question: Does network television news provide balanced coverage of facts and perspectives for the citizen viewers to form responsible and informed opinions?

J. Fred MacDonald is the author of Television and the Red Menace: The Video Road to Vietnam. This book chronicles the evolution of television and its use in the political process in America. It provided background on the impact the broadcast media has had on the changing political climate following World War II up to Vietnam. The author is professor of history at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. He is a recognized authority on the social and

cultural history of the mass media. His articles have appeared in Journal of Popular Culture, Phylon, and American Quarterly. He holds a B.A. and M.A. degrees from University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Susan D. Moeller is author of Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat. The book relates the experiences of past wars through the use of photography. The value of this work rest in the first-hand accounts of the photographers who captured the events on film. Moeller presents three chapters that relate to the Vietnam War. These chapters provided valuable insight as related by a photojournalist. The author is a lecturer in the Princeton University History Department and has worked as a photojournalist for several national magazines and newspapers.

Edgar O'Ballance provides a wealth of information on the United States involvement in Vietnam in his book The Wars in Viet am 1954-1973. The author provides a chronological narrative on many of the main events during the Vietnam War. This book serves as an easy guide through the courses taken by events in Vietnam. The book provided very useful and informative data concerning the Tet Offensive.

Michael Parenti's book Inventing Reality, provided information on the internal operations of the news industry. This book points out by example how the media handled some

political and social events. It also attempts to point of why the events were handled as they were. The author takes the position that some incidents of media distortion are in fact intentional.

The End of the Line the Seige of Khe Sanh by Robert Pisor provided information on some of the fighting that took place in Vietnam in 1968. The book deals with the North Vietnamese siege at Khe Sanh. It also relates how it affected the leaders in Vietnam and Washington. The author points out how Khe Sanh was used as a deception by North Vietnamese General Giap to set the stage for the Tet Offensive. A chapter is provided that covers the Tet Offensive and its impact.

James Reston's book The Artillery of the Press: Its Influence on American Foreign Policy deals with the problems of the press in democracy. In pointing out the conflicts between the press and government the author attempts to point out how the tension could be lessened. The author asserts that the press is a necessary mechanism to curtail the power of government by exposing it to the American people. He takes the position that the idea of the growing power of the press still is not as great as the power of the government. The book proves a good basis for understanding the press/government relationship in a democratic society.

Responsibility in Mass Communication by William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm provides information on the

relationship between the press and the public. This book was used because it contained "The Television Code," and its chapter dealing with government and freedom of the press.

In his book Who Controls the Mass Media?, Martin H. Seiden looks at all forms of the mass media. He describes all the media television, radio, newspapers and magazines and examines those individuals and organization in positions to influence the media. He presents excellent information on how the media is set up, controlled and manipulated.

Vijay Tiwathia is author of The Grenada War: Anatomy of a Low-Intensity Conflict. His book examines the United States operation in Grenada in the context of a low intensity conflict. He provides valuable information in Chapter nine on the government, military and media relationship during that operation. He points out some actions taken by government and military officials to manage the media. He also identifies the problems that resulted from the way the media was handled. Tiwathia is a major in the regular Army of India. He holds a Master of Philosophy degree in Disarmament Studies from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He is a Ph.D. candidate in International Affairs.

Kim Willenson in his book The Bad War deals with several of the schools of thought on the American failure in Vietnam. One of these concerned the press and its undercutting of the war effort with negative reporting. The

author provides a chapter that deals with press coverage of the war. The chapter on the press contains accounts of the war provided by some of the correspondence that had covered it.

### Film

The film series "Vietnam: The Ten Thousand Day War" narrated by Richard Basehart proved very useful for the purpose of this study. Volume 4 which is titled Siege, Frontline America, provided information and background on the siege of Khe Sanh and the beginning of the Tet Offensive. This volume also related how these two battles affected the officials in Washington and boosted the antiwar atmosphere in America. Other volumes in the series are: vol I America in Vietnam, Deinbienphu; vol 2 Days of Decision, Uneasy allies; vol 3 The Trial Firepower; vol 5 Soldiering on, The Village war and vol 6 Peace, Surrender, The unsung Soldiers.

"Vietnam: A Television History" is a thirteen part series with copyright by WGBH Educational foundation. It was first shown on the Public Broadcasting Station. Part 7, titled Tet, 1968 provided information concerning the impact the Tet Offensive had on both military and civilian leaders. It reflects the splits that occurred in Washington and the impact the splits had on the military focus of the war. Part II Homefront U.S.A. was used to examine the chain of events that were occurring in America with regard to the public's attitude toward the war. This part of the series provided

information on the different organizations and the actions they took to make their views of the war known. The other parts to this series are: Pt 1 The Roots of War; Pt 2, The First Vietnam 1946-1954; Pt 3, America's Mandarin 1954-1963; Pt 4, LBJ goes to War; Pt 5, America takes charge; Pt 6, With America's enemy, 1954-1967; Pt 8, Vietnamizing the War, 1969-1973; Pt 9, No neutral ground; Cambodia and Laos; Pt 10, Peace is at Hand; Pt 12, The end of the tunnel 1973-1975, and Pt 13 Legacies.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: Control and Responsibility

Throughout history the press has played a major role in presenting accounts of events taking place to the public. The authors of the Constitution of the United States recognized the value of the press and protected it in the first amendment. However, the potential power of the press was not fully recognized at that time. The idea of the government guaranteeing freedom of the press did not and was not to produce a reciprocal relationship. There was no guarantee that the press would protect the government. The government, as we now know, would become a popular target for the press. Thomas Jefferson as an author of the document that protected the press had early mixed feelings about the relationship between the press and government. Jefferson openly articulated the need of a free press and its role of keeping the people informed about the nation:

The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right, and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspaper, or newspapers without government I should not hesitate a moment to choose the latter.<sup>1</sup>

No government ought to be without censors and where the press is free, no one ever will.<sup>2</sup>

Jefferson's view changed as he became a part of the government. His change in attitude about the press was reflected in his second inaugural address.

The artillery of the press has been leveled against us, charged with whatsoever its licentiousness could devise

or dare. These abuses of an institution so important to freedom and science are deeply to be regretted, inasmuch as they tend to lessen its usefulness, and sap its safety.<sup>3</sup>

Jefferson's quotes are reflective of the relationship that was beginning to form between the press and government. It is interesting to note that Jefferson was a staunch supporter of a free, unrestrained press when drawing up the Constitution and as president he saw a need to somehow control the press. The early frustration's of Jefferson are still present today between the press and government. The government still insists that there is a need for a more responsible press in handling items pertaining to the nation.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, technology had improved the speed, quantity of distribution, and the clarity of events reported. The public relied on the press to report information on national and international events. The press holds a position in the democratic society from which it can influence the - ideas and attitudes of the public. It could inspire the people or rally them against a cause or event. The power of the press has grown rapidly since Thomas Jefferson's day.

On examining the use of the press in covering the hostile conflicts of this century, it is obvious that efforts were undertaken to control it. The most prevalent was government censorship of stories released to the public. This chapter provides a brief history on the interaction between the press, government, and the military during

wartime operations. It covers the three twentieth century wars prior to Vietnam. It points out how the press covered these early wars and some of the constraints under which it operated.

#### WORLD WAR I

Before the United States' entry into World War I, the British fully recognized the power of the press to excite the public. The British propaganda section undertook an effort to win American sentiment towards the war. The British propagandists released stories that portrayed the Germans in a sinister demonic role seeking to dominate all of Europe. Their story lines called for a unified effort by English speaking people. This type reporting made it easy to cast Germany in a role that threatened the national security of the United States. The effort succeeded in winning sentiment throughout American society, thereby helping swing America from its position of neutrality. Most Americans began to view the war as a battle of good versus evil. The coverage of the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915 really brought the war to the eyes of America. The press had so influenced the American people that despite the fact that in 1916 the majority of the people favored neutrality, the pure hatred generated against all things German made war inevitable. On 6 April 1917, America entered World War I.

The emotions and hatred inspired by the press proved very shallow. Even after war was declared, the American

people showed great reluctance to take up arms. The press again would be used to inspire public support. The effort was to kindle what President Woodrow Wilson's private secretary, Joseph Tumulty, called the people's righteous wrath.<sup>4</sup> Stories from Europe about the war and atrocities committed by Germany were used to stir the American public. The government was now seeking to control and turn the artillery of the press on the public. The reporting of this period would lead Senator Hiram Johnson to say, "The first casualty when war comes is truth."<sup>5</sup>

Control of the press was a factor of concern at the highest levels of American government. Not more than a week after war was declared President Wilson appointed a Committee on public information with George Creel as chairman. Funding for the committee was made available from a grant for the general defense of the country. To fund a venture of this nature from a grant for the defense of the country acknowledged the press as a powerful wartime weapon.

The primary tasks of the Creel Committee were to publish facts about war, to oversee the government's propaganda campaign, and act as liaison to newspapers. A plan of voluntary censorship was developed under which newspaper editors agreed not to publish material that might aid the enemy. This whole idea seemed contrary to the laws of the United States where the Constitution guaranteed the freedom of the press. But it seemed, that the principles of

a nation at war demanded control not only of the way people fought, but also of the way they thought. The government would take that control and manipulate the attitudes and ideas of the public through the press.

Creel saw his task as a vast enterprise in salesmanship, and American patriotism was his incentive. His committee sponsored speakers, who spoke throughout America to arouse the wrath of the nation toward the war effort. The Creel committee was successful in having newspapers agree to a code of voluntary censorship and some even went beyond that code. The efforts of the committee lead to the mobilization of the entire nation in support of America's involvement in the war. Supportive publications were published. Advertising agencies were created to place positive images before the public in the form of placards, posters, magazine and newspaper ads, to promote public support. Newsreels were put together by the newly developed motion picture industry.

The Creel committee was just the beginning of the government's efforts to control the press during war. The censorship of the Creel Committee was voluntary, but laws were passed that imposed mandatory censorship. The first of these laws was the Espionage Act of June 15, 1917. The act made it possible to suppress those considered to be disloyal to the American and Allied War cause. If an individual or newspaper was suspected of making false statements or reports with the intent of interfering with the successful operation

of the military and willful attempts to promote disloyalty to the nation that might obstruct recruitment, they faced heavy fines or imprisonment.

The act allowed the Postmaster General to prohibit mailing correspondence and other material that were identified as violations. In its first year this act resulted in nearly seventy-five papers losing their mailing privileges. Some were able to retain this privilege only by agreeing not to print anything about the war. Heads of some papers were even tried and sentenced to prison for violating the act. The wheels were in motion to either silence the press or to have it report in the best interest of the war effort.

In October 1917, the Trading With The Enemy Act was passed, which authorized the censorship of all communications moving in or out of the United States. It gave the Post Office the right to demand translation of items published in foreign languages before being processed. This was aimed specifically at keeping German language papers in line. The Trading With The Enemy Act was followed by the Sedition Act of May 1918.

The Sedition Act served as an amendment and broadened the application of the Espionage Act. The Sedition Act made it a crime to write or publish disloyal, profane, or abusive language about the United States, the Constitution, or any of the uniformed services. Using language intended to bring the

ideas of these institutions and documents into contempt, scorn, indignity, or dishonor were also made a criminal offense. This act increased the censoring power of the Postmaster General. Fear of the potential problems of this act coupled with the knowledge of the failure of the Sedition Act of 1789 interfered with its full enforcement. Mrs. Rose Pastor Stokes received a ten-year sentence for writing a letter to the Kansas City Star saying "No government which is for the profiteers can be for the people, and I am for the people, while the government is for the profiteer."<sup>6</sup> Her sentence was later reversed. There were others who received this same type of persecution. The wartime atmosphere was favorable to the restriction of civil liberties.

Under the existing circumstances the American press faced an almost impossible task. To gain accreditation as a war correspondent to the American Expeditionary Force a reporter had to appear personally before the Secretary of War or his authorized representative and swear that he would convey the truth to the American people, but would not disclose facts that might aid the enemy.<sup>7</sup> Under the conditions imposed the bulk of the American press was fortunate to escape the harassment formulated by the government. Through strict controls the government proved effective in using the press to support its policy decisions. The cooperation and voluntary censorship of the press had served to keep the spirit of most Americans high

and boosted national pride. When the war ended, censorship of information came to an end. The armed forces of America returned home and resumed a peacetime status.

### World War II

The strict controls levied against the press during World War I, had set the stage for how coverage of war would be governed. The practice of censorship to many violated the very core of the first amendment to the Constitution. Most wartime reporters had followed the call of patriotism and accepted censorship. There were other, however, who fought to report the truth even at the threat of losing their jobs. They felt the public had the right to be informed in order to interact in government and understand policy decisions. Many journalists who gained notoriety during World War I, were around to cover World War II.

The strict controls invoked during World War I had lost most of their thrust. In 1921 the Sedition Act was repealed. When America geared up for war, members of the press were well aware that the Espionage Act and the Trading With the Enemy Act of 1917 were still on the books. Even the power of these acts would be more limited than during World War I. Censorship would again be placed on the press in reporting wartime events.

To carry out the task of censorship, the Office of Censorship was reopened and Byron Price was appointed as its director. Price's job was very similar to that of his

predecessor George Creel. He had to ensure that the press would abide by a code of voluntary censorship. To aid the press in determining what was considered as acceptable reporting, the Code of Wartime practices for the Press was issued. The code outlined the subjects and materials not to be covered for security reasons. Items included were news having to do with troops, planes, ships, war production, armaments, and military installations. The code served as the guiding policy for newspaper and radio reports alike.

During World War I the major dilemma of those censoring news was controlling the printed word. Military censorship for World War II mirrored that of the previous war, with the added problem of controlling radio broadcasts. The efforts to control both medias drew heavy fire but still proved successful. Coverage of World War II, by the American press and radio was considered by most observers to be the best and fullest the world had ever known.<sup>8</sup> On the European front the censorship techniques used by General Dwight D. Eisenhower were considered satisfactory. This was not the case in the Pacific. General Douglas MacArthur exercised strict control of the press in the Pacific. He not only suppressed reports but caused great frustration among members of the press. His information office was accused of manipulating stories submitted for censoring. Most reporters claimed that stories were handled in a way to glorify MacArthur. Again censorship had been employed and adhered to

by the news media, and when Japan surrendered the Office of Censorship was terminated. Though the Office of Censorship had been dissolved, the feeling that censorship was needed to protect defense information still prevailed. In assessing the impact of censorship on the correspondents of World War II, Charles Lynch said:

We were a propaganda arm of our governments. At the start censors enforced that, but by the end we were our own censors. We were cheerleaders. I suppose there wasn't an alternative at this time. It was total war. But, for God's sake, let's not glorify our role. It wasn't good journalism. It wasn't journalism at all.<sup>9</sup>

This quote sums up the impact that using the press as a psychological arm of war had on the journalism profession.

#### Korean Conflict

Many attempts were made after World War II to safeguard defense information or information deemed necessary to protect national security. As America again moved toward hostile conflict on foreign soil, the issue of uncensored press coverage remained unresolved. Repeal of the censorship acts of the earlier wars almost negated news censorship. When America became committed to armed military action in Korea, there was no official censorship. In the early stages of this conflict the only control of the press that existed was a code for reporting war. This code was very similar to the code established by Byron Price. It was voluntary and directed at protecting military secrecy.

In Korea the members of the press would face two forces that had been points of frustration during World War II. The first was censorship, the second was General Douglas MacArthur. In the beginning Gen. MacArthur allowed reporters to cover the conflict as they saw fit. He hesitated to impose the censorship practices of the two world wars. The feeling existed that reporters now understood their role in wartime reporting. The idea that reporters would join the military team and support its efforts created an atmosphere of tolerance for early reporting. This tolerance would not be long lived. Numerous reports about the poor quality of soldiers and officers, lack of equipment, and the lack of purpose in the conflict would lead to some reporters losing their accreditation. Gen. MacArthur and his staff were very critical of the news being reported. Along with his staff, Gen. MacArthur levied charges that the press was publishing information helpful to the enemy. Gen. MacArthur lifted the ban on several journalists, but not before he reminded them that they had an important responsibility in the matter of psychological warfare.<sup>10</sup>

After much criticism, Gen. MacArthur imposed a system of full censorship. The new system created mandatory censorship, and covered the military, and the publishing of information damaging to United Nations forces or that would be embarrassing to the United States. The most startling aspect of this censorship system was the provision subjecting

reporters to trial by court martial for serious violations. When Gen. MacArthur was removed as commander of forces in Korea, the censorship situation was eased somewhat.

In an effort to deal with censorship during the Korean War there were two changes that came about that are still in effect today. First, President Truman, in an effort to settle the issue of adequate and appropriate censorship of information critical to the military or national security, formalized a system of classification. By executive order federal agencies were authorized to mark information considered sensitive top secret, secret, confidential or restricted.<sup>11</sup> The category of restricted was later dropped. The executive order was very unpopular with the press. It allowed officials to deny the press information by simply classifying it. Tension exists today between the press, government, and the military over the classification system.

Second, in 1952, the Department of Defense issued new field censorship instructions. They transferred censorship duties from intelligence officers to public relations officers. This put the Army, Navy, and Air Force under the same plan. Even with the sweeping changes that occurred in Korea concerning the press, censorship, the military and national interests, the issue was still not resolved.

The one issue apparent from past wars was that a veteran pool of war correspondents was being developed under

the controls of censorship. Though some complained about censorship, pressure and the call of patriotism caused them to accept the military views on how war should be reported. The members from the pool of journalists, who covered earlier wars reappeared to cover America's involvement in Vietnam, this time with a new medium of reporting at hand (television) and fewer controls to limit their efforts. During the early wars the government had succeeded in incorporating the press into the weaponry of war. The press was used to support the war effort and barred from speaking out against the government. The value of the press in getting the nation's story told was recognized by the presidents in the early wars. Experienced journalists were hired by the government as heads of the committees on public information. Through the use of strict laws and censorship the government executed effective propaganda campaigns during these wars. The press was an important tool in the psychological conduct of war. The legacy of the early wars was a nation, government, and military that came to expect the press to support them during war.

In 1970, a CBS News survey disclosed that 55 percent of its respondents opposed freedom of the press during war. The response was to the question "Except in times of war, do you think newspapers radio and television should have the right to report any story even if the government feels it's harmful to our national interest?"<sup>12</sup> This finding

dispeled the contention of the press that the public would not support government controls of the press. Even though this attitude existed during the Vietnam War there was no censorship enacted at any time during the war. There were however the animosities created among the press, the government, and the military during the earlier wars that carried over into how the Vietnam War was covered. All was now in place for the way the news networks would handle America's television war.

#### ENDNOTES

1. James Reston, The Artillery of the Press, (1967): p.1.
2. Reston, p.6.
3. Reston, vii.
4. Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty, (1975); p. 122.
5. Knightley, p. ii.
6. Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America, 4th Edition, (1978): p. 332.
7. Knightly, p. 124.
8. Emery and Emery, p. 339.
9. Knightley, P. 333.
10. Knightley, p. 337.
11. Juergen A. Heise, Minimum Disclosure, (1979): p.87.
12. Hazel Erskine, "The Polls: Opinions of the News Media Government Controls," Public Opinion Quarterly, (Winter 1970-71), p.632.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Television and Reporting

The methods in news reporting have changed greatly since early colonial days. Technology over the years improved the printing press, developed the radio and perfected television as a broadcast medium. Television bypassed the written word in the early 1960's, as the primary source of news covering national and international events. This was determined by a survey conducted by Elmo Roper. Surveys by Elmo Roper show that in the early 1960's television had replaced newspapers as the public source of news. In another survey Roper identified a credibility trend between television and newspapers. The trend that follows was derived from the question: "If you got conflicting or indifferent reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe - the one on the radio or television or magazine or newspapers?"<sup>1</sup>

#### Most Inclined to Believe

	<u>Television</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>
1959	29%	32%
1961	39%	24%
1963	36%	24%
1964	41%	23%
1968	44%	21%

This trend reflects the growing confidence placed in television. This confidence, along with the rapid growth of television during this same time period, made it a valuable medium to the American public.

Since television has become the major medium in bringing news to America, there is a need to produce material for broadcast. The eyes and ears of the news networks are everywhere in the world today, seeking out and listening for events considered newsworthy. These events are packaged and broadcast into the homes of millions of Americans each day. The broadcasts take on the task of informing the masses about the world and their immediate environment. Many times they focus on conflict at home and abroad and what the government's role in the conflict is or should be. The nature of government and the television news places them in direct contrast in many ways. The government must operate effectively which sometime means in secrecy and the press operates effectively in the open informing the people. Another way is that the government in a democratic nation is by the people. The masses take part in the government to select and vote on how issues are handled. Television news is quite different. Only a few individuals get involved in selecting the issues to be presented as news.

In the United States control of television is in the hands of a relatively small number of the corporate rich. Approximately ten business and financial corporations control the three major television networks (NBC, CBS, ABC), 23 subsidiary television stations and 201 cable TV systems.<sup>2</sup> A.J. Liebling once stated that freedom of the press was for those who owned the presses. The same expression could be applied to television news broadcasts, that; control of

television news is for those who own the networks and stations. In the hands of this small group of organizations rests the responsibility to inform the public. If the belief is true that television news plays a large role in shaping public opinion in America, then this small group has a vast power potential.

Network news organizations select the events and issues portrayed to the public as national and world news on television. There is concern that the networks could use their control of news programming to advance their own political interest. This would be accomplished by systematic presentation of pictures of society that favor certain political groups and values and demean others. The concern over the all-powerful television network news is voiced in all facets of the political system. In expressing his fear of public television, Nicholas Johnson, a member of the Federal Communications Committee (FCC), stated.

The networks, in particular...are probably now beyond the check of any institution in our society. The President, the Congress of the United States, the FCC, the foundation's and universities are reluctant even to get involved. I think they may now be so powerful that they are beyond the check of anyone.<sup>3</sup>

During his tenure as Vice President of the United States, Spiro T. Agnew made a similar declaration on the power of television. He stated, "No medium has a more profound influence over public opinion than television, over which the three networks have a virtual monopoly and thus for millions of Americans the networks are the sole source of

national and world news."<sup>4</sup> Television executives and news reporters seldom doubt that news pictures have a powerful effect on public opinion. The exact relationship between television news reports and public opinion may never be measured with certainty. The way reports are packaged and presented in a continuous manner establishes the way in which the public or those interested in politics perceive the nation. By broadcasting certain events as news the networks set the agenda on where public interest is directed. This ability to focus public interest bestows on the networks an amount of potential political power and causes great concern over controlling this power. The points of concern are valid; however, unlike the printed media with its constitutional protection, the broadcast media must adhere to set standards.

#### FAIRNESS IN NETWORK NEWS BROADCASTING

The idea expressed by both Nicholas Johnson and Spiro T. Agnew concerning television as a powerful medium caused great concerns in the political arena. There was the fear that television could be used to promote the view of only one political party to select candidates and settle major political issues in the interest of the networks. To prevent abuse of its perceived power television news broadcasts were to be governed by the standards of the Fairness Doctrine.

The Fairness Doctrine has been evolving for nearly sixty years. It dates back as early as 1929 under the

Federal Radio Commission (changed to the Federal Communications Commission in 1934). The Fairness Doctrine from its beginning has served as the fundamental standard to assure the public an opportunity to hear contrasting views on controversial issues of public importance. It is the responsibility of the Federal Communications Commission to enforce the provisions of the doctrine and to take action against violators. This section of the study will briefly explain the provisions of the Fairness Doctrine and the Television Code.

It is required that political coverage be nonpartisan and neutral. The standards for such neutrality are contained in the Fairness Doctrine and are sanctioned by the Supreme Court. The Fairness Doctrine is not based directly on an act of Congress but it carries the force of law. Violation of the doctrine could result in loss of a network's broadcast license. The Fairness Doctrine provides the conditions to news broadcasters on what is considered fair reporting. The doctrine mandates adherence to the following rules:

- (1) The network are required to select and broadcast contrasting and conflicting views on the major political issues - regardless of their truth or falsity.
- (2) This selective process is to be nonpartisan and must not favor either side.
- (3) And the selected opinion must be presented in an equal time and equally forceful manner.
- (4) The broadcaster is required to provide accurate and comprehensive news in a meaningful context.<sup>5</sup>

The standards of the Fairness Doctrine serve to keep the potential power of television news balanced. The foundation of the principle of the Fairness Doctrine was expressed in the Fairness Report of 1974.

It is axiomatic that one of the most vital questions of mass communication in a democracy is the development of an informed public opinion through the public dissemination of new ideas concerning the vital public issues of the day.... and we have recognized, with respect to such programs, the paramount right of the public in a free society to be informed and to have presented to it for acceptance or rejection the different attitudes and viewpoints concerning vital and controversial issues....It is the right of the public to be informed, rather than any right on the part of the Government, any broadcast licensee, or any individual member of the public to broadcast his own particular views on any matter, which is the foundation stone of the American system of broadcasting.<sup>6</sup>

The contents of this statement emphasize two points.. First, the public has a right to be informed. Second, the issues presented must be presented in a manner to allow the public to decide between opposing views.

Many in news broadcasting advocate that the Fairness Doctrine is an attempt to censor news. They claim that broadcast journalism is also protected from the provisions of censorship or attempts to limit the presentation of facts and ideas on critical issues. The doctrine's intent is to ensure that news broadcasters will not censor key facts or views to present unbalanced coverage of issues to the public. The doctrine attempts to make broadcast news a neutral debate forum when controversial issues are involved.

The Fairness Doctrine is further reinforced by the Television Code. The television code acknowledges the duty of television to promote the democratic process by public enlightenment. It makes broadcaster responsible to provide well-balance and adequate news presentations that are factual, fair and without bias. The code further combines the elements of promoting public good with promoting public morals. The code is set by the National Association of Broadcasters. Sections V, VI, and VII of the code deal with presenting reports for the good of the public. These sections cover the standards for treatment of news and public events, controversial public issues and political telecasts, respectively. The complete contents of these sections are in appendix C. If the networks obey the standards of the Fairness Doctrine and the Television Code they are no longer in control of the context of the opinions they select for transmission.

As defined by the FCC, adherence to the standards placed on broadcast journalism will result in fairness. Networks that fail to do so are guilty of bias. One need only examine some quotes made by members of the news broadcast arena to fully assess the potential danger of bias. The arrogance of power exercised by those in broadcast journalism is best summed up in this quote by a noted network anchorman, Walter Cronkite, who stated, "We're big. We're powerful enough to thumb our nose at threats and intimidation from

government. I hope it stays that way."<sup>7</sup> This attitude is supported by the manner in which the three major networks covered the Vietnam War. Appendix D reflects the comparison in positive (for) and negative (against) coverage of the war as broadcast by the networks. The results displayed clearly show that the networks indeed thumbed their noses at the Fairness Doctrine, the Television Code, and the government.

The evidence presented in the figures reflects obvious bias in the networks' coverage of Vietnam. Even with evidence to prove otherwise, many news executives claim their network provided balanced coverage. These same executives, along with some news broadcasters continue to question the legality of the Fairness Doctrine. This type of behavior and evidence showing doctrine violations brings the networks under continued scrutiny due to claims of bias and news manipulation. In defense of the networks Richard S. Salant, while an executive at CBS, stated "Our reporters do not cover the stories from their point of view. They are presenting them from nobody's point of view."<sup>8</sup>

This view was not shared by a broadcaster from another network. David Brinkley on NBC stated, "News is what I say it is. It is something worth knowing by my standards."<sup>9</sup> Critics of bias in network news point to the issue of who determines what news is as the reason for the inevitable bias of television news. The data reflected in appendix D provides evidence of how the editorial process and news item

selection can result in bias in news presentations. Dr. Edward J. Epstein supports the claims of the critics that news reflects the values of an elite group. He gives four reasons why the news programs of the three major networks contain biased views. The reasons are as follows:

1. Virtually all national news is filtered through and controlled by a group of men in one city, New York.
2. Most national - news footage is drawn from just four metropolitan centers - New York, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles.
3. National news is, in fact, routinely created, by starting with general hypothesis rather than with actual happenings.
4. Events that are visually exciting are more likely to get air time than others which may be equally or more significant.<sup>10</sup>

Item number four is of key interest when examining the manner in which news is packaged. It is set up to gain and maintain attention.

Network news applies as much attention to entertaining as is applied to informing. In 1968, Roper T. MacNeil wrote the following statement concerning the show business atmosphere surrounding the news:

It is not true to say that television journalism is show business. It is true that its destiny is ultimately in the hands of men who make their livings in show business and advertising.<sup>11</sup>

Television news is packaged to hold the interest of a socially diverse audience. As a result the networks seek to entertain as well as inform. The tendency to hold audiences pushes the networks toward reporting issues beyond the status quo. The networks thus seek to cover bad news rather than good, the exception rather than the rule and to focus on the

dramatic, visual, and human interest aspects of a story.<sup>12</sup> When the half-hour network news program was initiated Reuven Frank, then executive producer of the NBC Evening News gave his staff the following instructions.

Every news story should, without any sacrifice of probity or responsibility, display the attributes of fiction, or drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and denouement, rising action and falling action, a beginning, a middle and an end. These are not only the essentials of drama: they are the essentials of narrative.<sup>13</sup>

This format for packaging news is employed today by all networks in an effort to hold viewer attention. In seeking to do this the networks do not always fully inform their viewers.

#### LIMITATIONS OF TELEVISION NEWS

The nature of television news reporting and packaging places a burden on the networks on how well events are covered. There are some prominent aspects of television news that limit its effectiveness in covering controversial events. Some of these aspects are: (1) the lack of time to cover events in depth; (2) the power of visual images; (3) a concentration on visual events instead of ideas or trends, and (4) the search for drama in dealing with fragments of reality as they materialize day to day. Each network may have a different format for its news broadcast but all are constrained by these four aspects of television. Avram Westin, a former network producer, made this comment on putting together a news telecast.

Every executive producer should have a concept before he begins and it is up to him to translate that concept into the reality of approximately thirty minutes of moving pictures, slides, maps, graphics, anchormen, field correspondent's reports and, hopefully, commercials.<sup>14</sup>

Like any other business television networks must attempt to fulfill basic requirements to survive in a competitive world. The news presented is organized to meet those basic requirements.

The two features mentioned above that have the greatest affect on television news are time and the power of visual images. The time allotted to news programs doesn't allow full or adequate coverage of controversial events. Each minute is highly regarded in presenting a broadcast that will inform and hold the viewer's interest. Each story or event presented must be concise, uncomplicated, and brief in the effort to cover all elements of what is considered news. The resulting effects of news packaging to fit time constraints are loss of the fine points of a story or story perspective. In comparing the impact of time on the coverage of events on television and in the newspaper Walter Cronkite made the following point: "Newspapers can make room for lengthy, complicated items on their inside pages but television news is all front page."<sup>15</sup> The lack of time in packaging television news causes a concentration of stories to the point of distortion. In reporting violent events, such as war, it results in concentration on the violence to the exclusion of the whole event.

The nature of television as a broadcast medium is to present a visual story. In news broadcasting this raises the dilemma of distortion created by taking a small portion of events and displaying it as the whole event. The viewer is then caught up in the old adage that 'pictures don't lie' and accepts what is presented as truth or reality. News photographers and television cameramen are among the first to admit that what they picture and how they picture it determine whether their pictures reflect reality.<sup>16</sup> Television news is just as much show business as it is journalism. It is the show business aspect of the news that prevents the broadcaster from pointing out that the picture presented should be judged in a broader sense.

In presenting a story pictures and words are combined to convey the significance of the report. This combination results in words that describe the pictures and therefore reinforce the visual effect of the report. The objective of words in television news should be to distract from the picture and add qualification and understanding to the issues being reported. Most times the emphasis is on action in presenting the news. Action is the element which holds the viewers' attention and builds the audience for news programs. Action means movement and movement is something television cannot help emphasizing.

The limitations on television as a medium in reporting the war in Vietnam did not escape notice by members of the

media and the military. General William Westmoreland criticized television and the effects its limitations had on news coverage. He made the following statement on how the limits of television resulted in distortion:

The news had to be compressed and visually dramatic and as a result the war that Americans saw was almost exclusively violent, miserable or controversial.<sup>17</sup>

The issue identified by General Westmoreland was one recognized by others. Eric Sevareid in commenting on the problems encountered in covering the war said:

The really puzzling problem of reporting this war lies right with the nature of news and its processing. ...the lens of the cameras...are like a flashlight beam in the darkness. The focus upon what happens to be moving. All else ceases to exist, and the phenomenon focused upon tends to become, in the minds of the distant readers and viewers, the total condition.<sup>18</sup>

The inevitable limits of television news seriously hinders its effectiveness in covering wartime operations.

## ENDNOTES

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3. Edward Jay Epstein, News From Nowhere: Television and the News, (1973): p.6.
4. Epstein, p.7.
5. Edith Efron, The News Twisters, (1971), p.5.  
Of interest in this list is the indication that the Government and its officials are denied the right of manipulating television news. This point becomes critical later when examining the efforts of the Government in presenting developments in Vietnam to the public. The networks are left to present the news as deemed appropriated by the editors.
6. Ernest W. Lefever, TV and National Defense: An Analysis of CBS News 1972-1973, (1974): p.5.
7. Lefever, p.159.
8. Lefever, p.11.
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11. Robert Stein, Media Power, (1972): p.27.
12. Lefever, p.28.
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14. Edward J. Epstein, Between Fact and Fiction, (1975), p.192.
15. Andrew Arno and Wimal Dissanayake, The News Media In National and International Conflict, (1984), p.65.
16. William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility In Mass Communication, (1969), p.40.
17. Rivers and Schramm, p. 143.
18. Battle Line, p.68

## Chapter Five

### THE FIRST TELEVISION WAR

This study pointed out earlier the conflicts that developed among the press, the government and the military. Identified in the early chapter were methods used by the military and government to control news scheduled for release by the press. These controls were effective for several reasons. It must be pointed out that even though the controls were effective, they were not totally acceptable to the press. The military's censorship of news stories was effective because in most cases the military controlled the support resources, the most important of which was the communication system. The dependence of the press on the military for support made the press very vulnerable to military censorship. This dependency frustrated the press and aggravated an already deteriorating relationship.

As technology improved, control of news released became less of a constraint on the press. The loss of control on news stories released by the press resulted in irritation to the military. With the printed media, censorship was effective. When radio came on the scene, controls by the military became more difficult. At the end of the Korean War, television began making significant advances as a medium for news broadcast. This medium would completely change the methods for news reporting of international events.

Television was in its infancy stage following the Korean War. According to data cited by Phillip Knightley and supported by both Fred MacDonald and Susan Moeller, the number of televisions in American homes grew rapidly from the early 1950's to the mid 1960's.<sup>1</sup> Television was quickly accepted by the American public. This acceptance was tied to the entertainment aspects of television. Television had the power to bring to the homes of millions of Americans an interpretation of events and stories about the world.

Television had grown rapidly as a medium and just as rapidly it came to be trusted by its viewers. During a Roper poll conducted in 1959, television would rank with schools, newspapers and government in terms of its popular believability.<sup>2</sup> When these same respondents were asked, if only one could be kept, which communication medium they would most want to save, television won easily.<sup>3</sup> Television outdistanced its nearest competitor (radio) by ten percentage points. For the raw data on the findings of the poll see appendix E. Few will argue with the facts on the growth and appeal of television. During the Vietnam War, it was the primary means of presenting news of national and international events to the American public.

As pointed out in an early chapter, television as a news medium has its limitations. Yet, with these limitations and an unfamiliarity with television in war coverage, the major networks would cover the war in Vietnam.

## BACKGROUND: EARLY COVERAGE

The American press showed little interest in the early years of Vietnam (1954-1960). During this period most reports concentrated on the menace of communist expansion. The appeal was for a greater American involvement in the area to contain China. This theme of containing China by an American presence in the area became known as the "domino theory."<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that in the early 1960's, only the New York Times had a fulltime correspondent in Saigon<sup>5</sup> This was a period when the American commitment to Vietnam was steadily growing. This absence of correspondents in Vietnam reflected a grave oversight by the American media or a preoccupation with national news items. Nowhere has this issue been fully addressed. It would be credited to the claims of news editors that they are better qualified than the public in determining issues of concern to the nation.

Events in Vietnam reached a level that could no longer be ignored, so the eyes of the American press were directed that way. By 1965, the small American press corps in Vietnam had distinguished itself. Among its members were Malcolm Browne, Neil Sheehan and David Halberstam. This small corps of reporters faced difficult times in Vietnam in getting their stories told. One complication was that their accreditation came from the Vietnamese government, which saw no reason to allow foreign correspondents to cover stories

critical of its performance. Another complication was the efforts of the American government and the United States Military Assistance Group to conceal the full American involvement in the war against the Vietcong.

The effort to conceal American involvement in Vietnam was a key factor leading to the hostile relationship between the military and the media. Deception and propaganda are both effective tools in waging war and are readily used by the military. The military assistance group tried to have members of the press support its propaganda campaign. American officials asserted that deception was necessary for success, and appealed to correspondents' sense of patriotism. The appeal was to avoid damage to national security. The correspondents wanting to print their stories reacted openly. Homer Bigart of the Herald Tribune, was prompted to write in the New York Times house magazine,

We seem to be regarded by the American mission as a tool of our foreign policy. Those who balk are apt to find it a bit lonely, for they are likely to be distrusted and shunned by Americans and Vietnamese Officials.<sup>6</sup>

The failure to isolate the press as a positive weapon in the American arsenal of power was a grave error. Unlike in early wars, the press did not accept the appeal of the officials. This reaction perplexed the military leaders. Correspondents were patriotic in the World Wars and finally cooperated in Korea. To attempt to clear up the brewing hostilities between the military and the press, John Mecklin was sent to Vietnam. The State Department arranged for

Mecklin, then the bureau chief in San Francisco for the Times, to enter government service. Much like his predecessors in previous wars (George Creel and Byron Price), Mecklin faced the inevitable task of bridging the gap between the press and the military. The difficulty he faced stemmed from the dilemma that the American officials in Saigon held the line being given in Washington. This line was in direct contrast to what was actually happening. The official line was simply that all was going well.

Correspondents continuously attempted to get their stories told on the situation in Vietnam. They were not very successful. The mounting hostilities between press and military were mostly confined to those correspondents actually in Vietnam. The officials in Washington had so misled correspondents there that many editors, unable to reconcile the different story lines (official and Saigon press release), chose to present the official version. The result was positive coverage of the military involvement in Vietnam. The press corps in Vietnam at this time was still relatively small, and its members by now were bitter and lacked confidence in the government/military story line.

The American government did not at anytime during Vietnam impose any form of official censorship, instead a list of fifteen rules were published as guidelines for the press. The complete list of rules can be found in appendix F. The government called on the patriotism of reporters to

accept its story for the good of the country. The deception and pressure used by the government in its campaign against the press led to the collapse of government credibility. The attempt to hide the fact that a war was being fought in Vietnam prevailed throughout the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. During the Kennedy administration the State Department sent a cable to its information service in Vietnam. Cable 1006 warned against providing transport for correspondents on military missions that might result in producing undesirable stories. It further ordered that correspondents be told that any criticism of the Vietnamese government would make it difficult for the United States to maintain friendly relations in South Vietnam.

It should be evident by now that the stage was being set for continuous confrontation between the press and government. The military was in a sense heir to a deteriorated situation from which it would not rebound. Military officials kept to the directions and guidance of the Commander in Chief, following the political lead from Washington. Had an environment of trust been established by government leaders the press and the military may have enjoyed better relations. The credibility gap<sup>7</sup> that formed from government deception proved a fatal wound to the American effort in Vietnam. The press was now primed and eager to get the real story told. This was done by reporting opposite evidence from that being given by the government.

The result was unconscious negative coverage. Though the stories may have been true, the effort to close the credibility gap had become the focus of news coverage.

As the war began to expand it would have been prudent for the government to have taken a more visible stance on its involvement policy. It was evident that public support of the situation was to support the country's leadership. A valuable trait of the American people is the phenomenon of rallying around the flag against those things that threaten American security. The failure of leadership to validate a firm American stance added to the problems encountered by the military and the press. The press and the military were elements the government sought to use in furthering its policy in Vietnam. In evaluating the effect of the leadership's approach to American involvement in Vietnam, and the tendency of the people to follow leaders, a note from the American Political Science Review is cited:

One might speculate that the impact of the Pearl Harbor attack was not vital to public attitude toward World War II as might be supposed. President Roosevelt might have been able to carry much of the public with him had he simply led the country directly into war without benefit of that dramatic stimulus.<sup>8</sup>

This same sort of speculation can be applied to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, if they had sought to lead.

The adversarial relationship between the press and government did not exist throughout the press corps. Yet, even those members of the press viewed negatively by government officials showed an interest in seeing the United

States win the war. Throughout Washington noted and experienced newsmen were showing support of the government's efforts. Two prominent television newsmen, who aided the government's cause, Chet Huntley and Walter Cronkite, provided their talent to the government propaganda machine. Huntley aided by narrating the film 'The United States Navy in Vietnam'.<sup>9</sup> Cronkite narrated several films denouncing Communism and applauding the administration's success in increasing American military power. Corporate executives in the television industry also played their role in supporting the government. Both Frank M. Stanton and Robert E. Kintner were active in the Johnson administration.<sup>10</sup>

By late 1964, the war in Vietnam had escalated. This was in part due to the Tonkin Gulf resolution.<sup>11</sup> Public interest in the war was still not very high, as determined by the Gallup poll for that period. The lack of interest by the press was also apparent. In 1965, when the Marines splashed ashore in Vietnam, only five American news organizations maintained staff correspondents in Saigon.<sup>12</sup> The interest of news organizations would change rapidly. This is evidenced by the rapid growth in the press corps in Vietnam by 1968. At the height of the Tet Offensive in 1968, there were 637 accredited correspondents in Vietnam.<sup>13</sup> After 1968, the figure declined rapidly as the angle of coverage shifted to an American withdrawal and press interest decreased.

The war as it escalated drew all types of correspondents. It drew writers from technical journals, college newspapers, counterinsurgency experts, and veterans from previous wars. Many were drawn by ambition. The war was the biggest story in the world at that time. Vietnam was a place where young reporters could make a name for themselves. The press was criticized for sending inexperienced correspondents to cover the war. General Winant Sidle's remarks on this regard were as follows:

They sent over a lot of people who really weren't qualified to cover the war. They had no military background. For example, take a 23 year old man just out of journalism school who has been taught to be an advocacy journalist. He's the worst guy you can have covering a war.<sup>14</sup>

It was felt that Vietnam was much too complicated to be covered by inexperienced journalists. The factors of ambition and the desire for action shots would drive many newsmen to go to great risk for a story.

The members of the press corps would become frustrated by the war in Vietnam. Unlike other wars, in Vietnam there were no neat, simple, easily drawn conclusions. It was a war with no front line, no easily identifiable enemy, no clearly designated villain on whom to focus the national hate and, most of all, no nationwide patriotic cohesion. It was a war where military success was measured not by taking hills or storming beachheads, but by numbers. Success was measured by the number of missions (areas searched and cleared), the number of weapons captured, the number of villages relocated

and finally, the most critical, the body count. The factors presented here further served to distance the press and the military, as each attempted to adjust to its circumstances.

In many ways the military and the press were similar in operations in Vietnam. Each organization was striving to meet its objectives with some constraints from the government. The military as an arm of government would comply with the constraints levied by the government. Compliance with the orders of the president is a part of the military oath. To violate this was unimaginable. The press on the other hand as a monitor of the government had no similar mandate. Its members were still being frustrated by the credibility gap. The military action in Vietnam became the target of the press to show that the optimism of the administration and military leaders was not the true picture of the war. There is little wonder why the relationship of the two deteriorated. The Vietnam War was different to report. It was a war where complex political issues crossed over into military operations. It was a war where battle success was necessary but insufficient. It was not to be settled by the military.

The war was not broadcast as a series of military victories, but as a political failure. To the military fighting man winning the battles, this was hard to accept. The fighting man quickly developed a hate relationship toward the press. It became a common perception by members of the

military that the press was against the military. A lack of focused objectives from the strategic level made it difficult for the military to focus its goals. This omission also denied the press a national theme to carry.

Throughout 1967, the Pentagon and government officials in Washington had led the public to believe that an American victory was just around the corner. At this time the public still showed confidence in President Johnson. A Harris Poll conducted in 1967, showed that forty-two percent of those polled felt that President Johnson's words supported his actions.<sup>15</sup> The poll went on to rate the confidence the public had in the president. Surprisingly, in May 1967, thirty three percent of the respondents rated him good to excellent. By June the same year the number would rise to forty seven percent.<sup>16</sup>

The government had succeeded in convincing the American public that all was going well in Vietnam. Through it all the government still had credibility. This would change in 1968, as several key events were brought to the American public. These events would result in increasing the scrutiny with which the war had been examined. In early January 1968, General Westmoreland gave a very promising assessment on the condition of the American situation in Vietnam. This assessment would soon blow up in his face, though it contained some truth:

During 1967, the enemy lost control of large sectors of the population... In many areas the enemy has been

driven away from the population center; in others he has been compelled to disperse and evade contact, thus cultivating much of his potential... The friendly picture gives rise to optimism for increased successes in 1968.<sup>17</sup>

The truth in Westmoreland's words was that there would be successes in 1968, but they would be overshadowed. By the end of 1968, the Vietcong forces were neutralized and North Vietnamese regulars had taken over the fight. This fact would be concealed because of events that took place from January to March 1968. These events and how they were reported have been labeled as making 1968 the turning point for the American effort in Vietnam.

#### TELEVISION COVERAGE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN 1968

It is not the intent of this section to chronicle the many events of 1968. The intent is to examine television coverage of significant events, how the events were presented to the American public and the impact on the country. The year 1968 is chosen because it has been marked by historians as the turning point year in the Vietnam War. It was a year that would serve to close the credibility gap between officials and the press. Some results of the closure were policy changes, in public support of the war, and mass division in the leadership of America. It has been argued that the gloom and doom<sup>18</sup> reporting of events in 1968, caused the American will to break.

During the early years of the war, the military leadership in Vietnam and officials in Washington had led the

public to believe that victory was soon to come. This optimism was destroyed on 31 January 1968, when Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces launched synchronized attacks on 26 of the 44 provincial capitals and 64 of the 242 district towns in South Vietnam.<sup>19</sup> This all out assault coincided with the celebration of the lunar new year called Tet. Tet can be described as the Vietnamese version of Christmas, New Years, Memorial Day and the Fourth of July all in one. It is a time of truce and celebration. The attack by the Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces in violation of the standing truce would become the most famous offensive of the war. It would be known as the Tet Offensive of 1968. There was little attention given to the fact that a truce was violated.

The most critical area of attack during the offensive was the communist attack on Saigon, the capital city of South Vietnam. More importantly was the enemy's assault on the U.S. Embassy.<sup>20</sup> The Embassy had the symbolic significance of being the seat of American power in Vietnam. This attack was given extensive television coverage. The reason that there was so much footage on the fighting in Saigon can be linked to the number of reporters there expecting a lull in action brought on by the Tet celebration. Unlike other situations where reporters were dependent on the military to get to the site of events to cover, television correspondents and cameramen had open access to the action taking place. They were able to step from their hotels and enter the mainstream of combat.

Previous coverage of events in Vietnam reflected reports of operations after their completion or projected a well ordered view of the war with short glimpses of combat action. This was not the case in Saigon during Tet. Reporters were able to provide raw footage of combat action that showed reporters involved in what appeared as unorganized fighting as the military fought to regain control and the initiative. Reporters crouched down in the heat of battle to give commentary on the action around them, taking time to interview soldiers caught up in the fighting.<sup>21</sup>

The footage presented a pervasive range of the country in chaos. It presented to the public a different side of the War. It showed bodies of Vietcong sappers lying across the grounds of the Embassy compound and American soldiers falling in battle.<sup>22</sup> Though no proof exists to record the public's reaction to the footage, there is proof of how a member of the news networks was affected. Walter Cronkite on hearing the first reports of the offensive asked "What the hell is going on? I thought we were winning the war."<sup>23</sup>

The Vietcong sapper assault on the U.S. Embassy was the first major story to break during the Tet Offensive. Because of the early confusion of battle and correspondents' haste to get stories out, the first reports made it seem that the sappers had actually entered the embassy chancery. Both print and televised reports put forth this claim. Chet Huntley of NBC reported from wire service coverage,

The Viet Cong seized part of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon early Wednesday Vietnam time. Snipers are in the building and on rooftops... Twenty suicide commandos are reported to be holding the first floor of the embassy.<sup>24</sup>

Braestrup clearly shows the confusion and inaccuracies of early reporting on the event in Saigon. The emphasis the press placed on the attack at the embassy is reflective of the impact on the correspondents themselves. The fact that the Embassy represented America and in many reports was identified as attack proof surely shocked the correspondents. It can be argued that reports that followed the Embassy assault reflected the psychological shock suffered by the reporters.<sup>25</sup>

The attack on the Embassy was inflated beyond its military significance, but as General Westmoreland attempted to show this his reports were downplayed. His credibility had been so severely damaged by his continued reports of optimism that reporters virtually ignored his proclamations.<sup>26</sup> Hanoi did not claim a victory of any type resulting from the Embassy attack; however, American correspondents were quick to award the North Vietnamese and Vietcong a psychological victory.<sup>27</sup> The battle in Saigon had ended by the end of the first week of February, but the reports were hardly over.

As American military leaders were claiming to have broken the morale of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong, television news was heralding their will to fight. In an NBC

special, Robert Goralski reported. "The Communists may not be winning the war, as the Pentagon claims but they don't seem to be losing it either."<sup>28</sup> CBS reporter Jeff Gralnick's commenting on the battle at Hue, said "the battle showed that the Vietcong proved they could take and hold almost any area they chose."<sup>29</sup> The Vietcong were portrayed as ready and willing to die. The military of South Vietnam was reported to have lost its will to fight.

On an NBC news report Senator Edward Kennedy was quoted, as stating "The efforts of the South Vietnamese are still halfhearted."<sup>30</sup> This statement was made prior to Tet but aired on 1 February 1968, as the offensive was underway. This statement was rebutted by Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Eugene V. Rostow, who stated,

On the military side, I need not make the point that complaints that the Vietnamese have ceased to fight are grossly insulting. What I must stress, however, is...the fallacy that somehow Vietnam is an all American war with a few Vietnamese sitting on the side line.<sup>31</sup>

Stories on the South Vietnamese military's effectiveness was given little coverage. No mention was made of the fact that South Vietnamese forces were at reduced strength due to Tet, but still managed to thwart the Vietcong's attacks. Edgar O'Ballance states that "the improved quality of the South Vietnamese military was a key factor in the enemy's failure during Tet."<sup>32</sup> The American public was being led by news reports to believe that only Americans were fighting and dying in the war.

Though the military won every battle, the press reported Tet as a victory for the communists. This type of reporting was in contrast to how the American fighting man saw the war. The victories were hard-earned and many saw their friends killed or injured during the battle, only to have the press reports reflect Communist victory. This caused an attitude of hate and distaste to form towards the press. The communists were slow to claim victory for Tet because their major objective of sparking a general uprising failed. In fact, in April 1968 the communists withdrew a claim of victory and made the following broadcast on Hanoi Radio:

We failed to seize a number of primary objectives, and to destroy mobile defense units of the enemy. We also failed to motivate the people to stage uprisings. The enemy still resisted and his units were not disrupted into pieces.<sup>33</sup>

The words of this broadcast displayed a tribute to the South Vietnamese fighting efforts and success along with American forces to defeat the enemy. Little mention was made of the evidence that South Vietnamese forces were at reduced strength due to Tet holiday leave. The way the news was broadcast to viewers in America gave support to the claim of psychological victory for the communists.

General Westmoreland eventually admitted that the Tet Offensive had gained the enemy a psychological advantage.<sup>34</sup> This is still far from accepting a psychological defeat. The advantage gained was due in part to an underestimation of

enemy capabilities. From a military point of view Westmoreland had reason to report optimistically because all battles were won and South Vietnamese and American forces had overcome the surprise attack and seized back the military initiative. It can be argued that military men trained in the art of war adapt more quickly to surprise operations with minimum psychological impact than do reporters. This can be reinforced with an accompanying situation of victory against the attacking enemy.

The press continued to carry the theme that the communists had achieved a psychological victory. This came as a result of the psychological shock suffered by the correspondents. Probably the case that best supports this claim is the reaction of Walter Cronkite, who was acknowledged as America's most influential news reporter.<sup>35</sup> Stanley Karnow used a quote by a politician which expresses how Cronkite was viewed. "By a mere inflection of his deep baritone voice or by a lifting of his well-known bushy eyebrows...might well change the vote of thousands of people."<sup>36</sup> His views of the war prior to Tet had been balanced. He was so shocked by what he was hearing and seeing about the war during Tet that he flew to Vietnam to see for himself what was going on.

While the military was fighting and neutralizing the enemy and seizing town after town that had been occupied by the communists, Cronkite would provide his assessment of the

Vietnam situation. Prior to his departure to Vietnam he had already indicated that he questioned the credibility of official reports. On 2 February, he reported

The allies proclaimed today that they have broken the back of the five-day old communist offensive in South Vietnam, but dispatches out of that pathetic country tell a somewhat different story.<sup>37</sup>

The final blow to be delivered by Cronkite came on 27 February as a CBS Special News Report. In it he gave his personal assessment on the situation in Vietnam. During the broadcast he stated:

We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds... For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in stalemate... To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past.... To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic yet satisfactory, conclusion... But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.<sup>38</sup>

Cronkite's broadcast shocked and depressed Johnson and others concerned about dwindling public opinion.

On 10 March, NBC presented an hour long special report on Vietnam by Frank McGee, during which the Vietcong were again given a psychological victory. McGee's report was more dramatic than the CBS report. He concluded his report by saying:

The cities are no longer secure; perhaps they never were. We don't know what has happened to the rural pacification program because the rural areas are under

communist control. We can only imagine. But if security is to be the forerunner of loyalty, then loyalty is further away than ever.... From all this, we must conclude that the grand objective -- the building of a free nation -- is not nearer, but further from realization.... In short, the war, as the Administration has defined it, is being lost.<sup>39</sup>

In less than two weeks two television networks, using very prominent news figures, had denounced the military's and Administration's claims of progress and victory. The airing of the reports overshadowed the recapture of Hue and reports from some reporters that all was not lost. There is evidence that reports on Tet resulted in a change in public opinion on the progress of the War. In November 1967 the results of a Gallup poll showed that 50 percent of the respondents felt that America and its allies were making progress in Vietnam and 8 percent felt they were losing ground. By February 1968, just after Tet, 33 percent of the respondents, to the same question, felt that progress was being made (17 percent drop) and the figure had risen to 23 percent (15 percent increase) for those feeling that American and its Allies were losing ground. For complete data on this issue see appendix G.<sup>40</sup>

The impact of television news coverage of the Tet offensive on the public is very difficult to quantify. There is, however, one image shown during Tet that few viewers have forgotten. This image was the execution of a prisoner by the Chief of the South Vietnamese National Police, shown in full detail. The American public was aware that people fought and

died during war, but never before had they witnessed the killing in their living rooms. The satellite broadcast of the execution has been described as the most powerful incident ever shown by television news.

Amid the chaotic fighting in the streets of Saigon on 31 January 1968, an NBC news crew and AP photographer Eddie Adams<sup>41</sup> captured on film the execution of a Vietcong prisoner. The results of their work were a still photograph and film footage that would shock the world. Their film brought the true horror of war into the homes of millions of Americans. On 1 February, John Chancellor provided narration for seven still life photographs from the wire service. In his narration he remarks

There was awful savagery...There was awful retribution. Here the infamous chief of the South Vietnamese National Police, General Loan, executed a captured Viet Cong officer. Rough justice on a Saigon street as the charmed life of the city of Saigon comes to a bloody end.<sup>42</sup>

This report was just the beginning of the coverage of this story. The film footage by the NBC news crew had not yet been transmitted.

The footage shot by the NBC news crew was flown to Japan and transmitted via satellite to America. The film was received in New York and reviewed by Robert Northfield, executive producer of the Huntley-Brinkley Report, and newsman John Chancellor. Northfield in describing the film stated "It was too rough for me.", and said to John Chancellor, "I thought that was awful rough."<sup>43</sup> Even so he

chose to cut the bloody portion and to go ahead with televising the footage. The film report by Howard Tuckner was introduced by Chet Huntley. Portions of Tuckner's report went as follows:

In this part of Saigon, government troops were ordered to get as much resolved as they could.... South Vietnamese Marines considered all civilian potential enemies. No one was above suspicion. (This is an interesting way to set the stage for the visible execution of a prisoner dressed in civilian clothes. It paints the impression that innocent civilian might be getting killed.)... Government troops have captured the commander of the Viet Cong commando unit... The chief of South Vietnam's national police, Brig. Gen. Nguyen Ngoc Loan was waiting on him.<sup>44</sup>

The footage of the execution followed the narrative. It showed the prisoner being marched down the street, as Tuckner stated the government troops had captured the Vietcong commander. It then showed the general drawing his revolver, while the narration stated that the general was waiting on him. Loan then shot the prisoner, who dropped to the pavement while blood spurted from his head. After viewing the first news broadcast Northfield edited more of the footage before it was broadcast again. The news of the loan execution was carried on all television news networks. Frank McGee used the footage in his NBC news special on 10 March; he included the following as part of his narration:

South Vietnam's national police chief had killed a man who had been captured carrying a pistol. This was taken as sufficient evidence that he was a Viet Cong Officer, so the police chief put a bullet in his brain. He's still chief of police.<sup>45</sup>

McGee was clearly using the film to cast doubt in the mind of the public.

Even without the type commentary given by McGee in his report on the Loan execution it was a shocking film. The first of its type presented during the war, it was sure to have affected those who viewed it. It would affect the public as well as government officials and their view of the Vietnam War. The impact resulted in some officials, such as Harry McPherson, turning against the war. In reaction to the execution film, McPherson stated:

I watched the invasion of the American embassy compound and the terrible sight of General Loan killing the Viet Cong captive. You got a sense of the awfulness, the endlessness, of the war--and, though it sounds naive, the unethical quality of a war in which a prisoner is shot at point blank range. I put aside the confidential cables. I was more persuaded by the tube and newspapers. I was fed up with the optimism that seemed to slow without stopping from Saigon.<sup>46</sup>

This is evidence that television coverage of the Tet offensive affected officials in policy making positions. Using the impact of the report on themselves as a standard measure, it can be argued that officials applied their shock to the public at large.

No commentary was given to telling the background story that resulted in the Loan execution. The statement made by General Loan on the scene after the execution was not aired in new reports. Loan was simply seen as a savage, cold blooded killer. Loan's reaction at the time of the shooting may have been better understood, had his statement after the

shooting been fully analyzed. Tuckner recalled that Loan walked up to him and said:

Many Americans have been killed these last few days and many of my best Vietnamese friends. Now do you understand? Buddha will understand<sup>47</sup>

Loan's appeal for understanding for his action was not understood and he was cast as a vicious and savage killer. His action shocked the world and the photographs can be seen in any pictorial account of the fighting in Vietnam. Loan's action was interpreted by many as an act of desperation, confusion and embarrassment. He was described by Roger Peterson of ABC as "embarrassed and angry."<sup>48</sup>

As the fighting in Saigon and Hue began to drop off, the eyes of the public turned to another area of pending disaster, the battle being waged at Khe Sanh. This battle is described as a siege when addressed in accounts of the Vietnam War. It was not actually a "siege"<sup>49</sup>. The battle at Khe Sanh started on 21 January 1968, and continued for seventy-seven days.<sup>50</sup> During this time reporters predicted the defeat that America would suffer, provided speculation on the communist intent and endeavored to show that American forces at Khe Sanh were totally helpless. The situation at Khe Sanh was most often compared to the 1954 French/Vietminh confrontation at Dienbienphu. At Dienbienphu the French were totally defeated by the Vietnamese.

The coverage of the situation at Khe Sanh, televised before the Tet Offensive, was in line with reporting on the

technology of the war. Coverage during Tet carried the theme provoked by the offensive. The theme was the communist are now on the offensive and America and its allies are losing the war. On 14 February, Murray Fromson provided a report on the situation at Khe Sanh on the CBS Evening News. In it he provided an assessment that placed the communists in full control of the situation at Khe Sanh. A portion of his report went as follows.

The weather slows down their (North Vietnamese) own resupply efforts and prevents fighter bombers from hitting mortar and artillery positions....If the airfield is knocked out and the weather stays bad we're in bad trouble. This is one place where the Americans cannot claim they have the initiative in Vietnam. Here, the North Vietnamese decide who lives and who dies....sooner or later they will make the move that will seal the fate of Khe Sanh.<sup>51</sup>

This report cast the North Vietnamese in a God like role and aired the reporter's doubt that American forces could hold at Khe Sanh. Fromson in effect predicted victory for the communists before they decided to attack.

In early reports on the battle at Khe Sanh the comparison to Dienbienphu was immediately made. It was a theme that would be held throughout the seventy-seven day situation. The comparison between Dienbienphu and Khe Sanh was made on eleven of the thirty-one combat film reports on Khe Sanh. Braestrup describes the use of the word Dienbienphu by newsmen as a convenient scare word.<sup>52</sup> This theme carried a heavy flavor of the impending disaster facing the American forces at Khe Sanh. The analogy to Dienbienphu

was in many ways an over exaggeration. Though there were similarities, the American situation was not as severe as that of the French. For a brief comparison see appendix H. The Dienbienphu comparison carried with it a forboding aire that disaster at Khe Sanh was inevitable. The constant comparison would lead to widening the gap between the press and the military. It was another area where military men saw the situation much different than newsmen, politicians and government leaders. Michael Herr of Esquire made note of the reaction by the military to the Dienbienphu analogy. A part of his presentation went as follows:

And as the first Marine briefings on Khe Sanh took place in Marine headquarters at Da Nang or Dong Ha, the name Dienbienphu insinuated itself like some tasteless ghost hawking bad news. Marines who had to talk to the press found references to the old French disaster irritating and even insulting. Most were not interested in fielding questions about it.....The more irritated they became, the more the press would flaunt the irritant. For a while it looked like nothing that had happened.... seemed as thrilling and sinister as the recollection of Dienbienphu.<sup>53</sup>

Not only was the comparison an insult to Marines, but Westmoreland was at the same time criticizing Walter Cronkite and Marvin Kalb for pushing the comparison.<sup>54</sup>

The Dienbienphu analogy hung so heavy in Washington that it resulted in a breakdown in confidence among Westmoreland, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President. General Westmoreland felt confident that the forces at Khe Sanh could hold. He resented being second guessed by other military leaders who were not in Vietnam and by newsmen who

he felt were not qualified to question his combat assessment.<sup>55</sup> The confidence displayed by General Westmoreland was not enough to satisfy the President. The international significance now placed on Khe Sanh and the vulnerability of the base haunted President Johnson more than anyone else.

The President did not share Westmoreland's confidence and did not accept his assessment of the situation. He ordered each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including the chairman, to conduct individual assessments and to provide assurance on Westmoreland's claim that the forces at Khe Sanh could hold. He told them "I don't want any Dienbienphu."<sup>56</sup> In a move unlike any other taken by a President towards members of his highest military staff, Johnson demanded that each member sign a formal declaration of faith in Westmoreland's ability to hold. The signed declaration was presented to the president. Even this action still did not improve his confidence.

On the same day that he received the signed declarations from the Joint Chiefs he ordered General Maxwell Taylor to review intelligence reports and to report his assessment.<sup>57</sup> This assessment, compiled from the Central Intelligence Agency's photomurals, concluded that the base could be in jeopardy. To further aggravate the President's fears General Taylor told him that it was an adage in the infantry that a commander could take any position if he is

willing to pay the price. The comparison of Khe Sanh to Dienbienphu by the press and political leaders drew the eyes of the world to that location, waiting and watching for a battle that never came.

The press once again aided the psychological war effort of the enemy by overemphasizing a situation and by attempting to read the communist leader's intent. North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap, the leader of the forces that defeated the French and of those against Khe Sanh, pointed out the insignificance of Khe Sanh. He stated "Khe Sanh assumed an inflated importance only because the Americans chose to make it a test of their prestige".<sup>58</sup> Giap's statement seems correct on examination of the number of enemy assaults made on Khe Sanh. In seventy-seven days only four ground assaults were made against the base. The actual attacks did not matter: Khe Sanh was news and the expectation of an all-out enemy attack kept it that way.

As early as 29 January, newsmen were attempting to read the mind of the communists, a practice that would persist throughout the siege. On the NBC News Show Huntley-Brinkley Report, Ron Nessen had this to say in his report:

The Marines think they will win another Iwo Jima, or Pork Chop Hill. The North Vietnamese think they will win another Dienbienphu.<sup>59</sup>

Reports of this type were being broadcast by other networks also. Walter Cronkite, reporting for CBS, described the

situation at Khe Sanh as a microcosm of the war. He concluded by revealing the doubt and division among military leaders and the men fighting in Vietnam.

Three weeks ago, President Johnson demanded and received from the Joint Chiefs of Staff the assurance that Khe Sanh could be held. In Vietnam, no one to whom this reporter talked, including the highest officials, were so certain....and among lower echelons there was great and admirable certitude but one sensed little conviction.... Khe Sanh now is mostly a symbol. But of what? Pride, morale, bravery, or administration intransigence and military miscalculation.<sup>60</sup>

This report gave the image that throughout the military structure there was doubt about the situation at Khe Sanh. Those in Vietnam were evaluated as having doubt because of an often quoted statement that any defensive position could be taken. The men fighting the battle at Khe Sanh, as well as Westmoreland, were ready for the enemy's attack.<sup>61</sup>

Another technique used in covering Khe Sanh was the repeated use of old war scenes accompanied by misleading commentary. A scene of downed aircraft at Khe Sanh was used many times to give the impression that Westmoreland's faith in air power might be flawed. On 22 March no all-out communist attack had come against Khe Sanh and coverage shifted to a different element of the Dienbienphu theme. That element was that the communist could cut off air resupply to the base and isolate it totally. This theme was set up by a 22 March broadcast on the CBS Evening News when Harry Reasoner included this analysis in his report:

And today it was disclosed that Khe Sanh may be in greater danger than ever. The reason ... the North Vietnamese ... have moved a highly mobile anticraft gun, the 37mm, into positions encircling Khe Sanh ... it was noted that the communists used the same guns to knock down French planes trying to supply the men at Dienbienphu.<sup>62</sup>

This report was followed on 28 March with a report by Jeff Gralnick on the CBS Evening News. His report makes it seem as if the North Vietnamese were ready to take the base and resupply or evacuation were threatened. Braestaup points out that at the time of this report the enemy was pulling back and allied forces were gearing up for Operation Pegasus, of which he says reporters were aware. Gralnick's report over stated the effectiveness of the communists in shooting down aircraft:

From out there the communist shoot at and hit almost every helicopter and cargo plane that flies into or out of Khe Sanh.<sup>63</sup>

The following day Garlnick interviewed troops against a backdrop of burned out aircraft. Never did he mention how many aircraft had been shot down. He had chosen a setting that satisfied the need for battle footage while at the same time reinforced his prior report theme. He concluded his report with a theme of hopelessness:

So there is no end in sight...So far the Marines and Seabees and the rest <sup>64</sup> here, there is nothing to do but sit and take it, just to wait, and hope they'll rotate out, leave before they join the roster of wounded and dead here.<sup>65</sup>

Even though reporters had projected defeat for American forces at Khe Sanh and kept the attention of the

world on that base, the end of the siege was anticlimatic. The day after Gralnick projected there was no end in sight, the forces at Khe Sanh began pushing out on the ground surrounding the base. The siege had come to an end without the devastation predicted by the press. Susan Moeller best sums up the dilemma of covering the war when she pointed out:

The war was like that. Events turned out to be nonevents, or to be overstated or understated, or simply to be misunderstood: The Gulf of Tonkin attack, the Tet Offensive and Khe Sanh.<sup>66</sup>

It is interesting to note that all the incidents she identified are those that were overstated and misunderstood.

Moeller's statement is aligned with the way television covered the war. Because television is dependent on action, it served to overstate stories on areas of intense fighting. Editorializing and selectivity of events considered newsworthy caused major items to be overlooked in the war; such as the social-economic conditions of the Vietnamese people or helping the American public to better understand the war. An example of overemphasis is the coverage given to Khe Sanh from February to March. Khe Sanh accounted for "twenty five percent of all television reports during that time (filmed and non-filmed).<sup>67</sup> It is no wonder it drew attention.

In presenting these broadcasts a new extension of the camera was used. This extension was in the form of broadcast by satellite transmission. During the Tet Offensive and the siege of Khe Sanh, ABC used the satellite three time, NBC six

times and CBS ten times.<sup>68</sup> This reflects the efforts of the networks to bring these battles into the homes of millions of Americans. In contrast, during the last six months of 1968, less than one percent of the film from Vietnam was relayed by satellite. Television news had taken extraordinary steps to bring the war to America in a negative light.

Tet was reported as a victory for the Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces by all networks. Late in 1968, a field producer for NBC suggested to Robert Northshield, a top executive of that network, a three part series showing that Tet had indeed been a decisive military victory for America. The series pointed out how the media had exaggerated greatly in reporting it as a defeat for the South Vietnamese and American forces. The idea was rejected by Northshield. He stated his reason for rejecting the idea that "Tet was already established in the public's mind as a defeat, and therefore it was an American defect."<sup>69</sup> Northshield's reaction reflects a common dilemma during the war and the attitude portrayed was symbolic of the media and government hostility.

The government felt betrayed by the media because of how they reported the war in a negative light. Members of the press felt they and the public had been betrayed by the government. Moeller, commenting on the attitudes of the press in covering the war in 1968, put it in this context:

The press came to believe that by establishing American control of Vietnam, by killing civilians and by lying to its own public, the United States government had abandoned its own democratic principles and, not so coincidentally, was losing the war.<sup>70</sup>

This observation supports the shift in the way Vietnam was covered. A shift from a supportive role to that of an adversary. Data supporting this claim is provided by Daniel C. Hallin, as follows:

Before Tet, editorial comments by television journalist ran nearly four to one in favor of administration policy: after Tet, two to one against. Before Tet of the battles journalist ventured to describe as victories or defeat, 62 percent were described as victories for the United States, 28 percent as defeats, 2 percent as inconclusive or as stalemates. After Tet, the figures were 44 percent victories, 32 percent defeats, and 24 percent inconclusive.<sup>72</sup>

The shift in coverage brought bitter reaction from members of the military who saw the war from a different perspective. The shift was combined with the conversion of key leaders in the federal government to a position against the war and indecision by the Commander-in-Chief. These items directly affected the military. First of all the military story wasn't being told; and it was being constrained by the indecision of the nation's leadership. The military was in effect abandoned on the battlefield while the press and government fought to deal with each other.

This segment of the study identified how television covered America's early involvement in Vietnam. It identifies events that resulted in a radical shift in how the press viewed America's involvement in the war.<sup>73</sup> Evidence

is provided on how the military was affect by the relationship between the press and the government. Examples of television broadcasts were provided reflecting how the networks sought to show that America and its allies were losing the war.

Television coverage of the war is credited as causing a shift in public opinion. To support the claim that television had the power to change public opinion Hallin said, "It doesn't matter whether television really has the immense impact on public opinion so many attribute to it; perhaps the reputation is enough."<sup>74</sup> It can be argued that the public may be less affected by television than officials think. The national leaders can be affected by television more so than the public. Evidence of this during Vietnam can be found at the highest level of government. The President had three television sets in the Oval Office. It is a safe argument to say that other officials were interested in news reports on public opinion and how the war was being reported. When Walter Cronkite made his famed report on 27 February and proclaimed the war a bloody stalemate, the President is said to have turned to one of his aides and stated "It's all over."<sup>75</sup>

#### IMPACT OF COVERAGE

The certainty of how much television coverage affected the public or if it caused a shift in policy is difficult to determine. To sum up the findings of Gallup and Harris

polls, before Tet, a majority of Americans supported the war effort. After Tet, the majority disapproved. This however, is not proof that television alone caused the shifts. The perceptions that developed in military circles were that the press did not understand military operations and therefore reported them from the wrong points of view. This perception was held by Westmoreland and permeated throughout the ranks. Westmoreland felt very strongly that the media, especially television, had undermined the military effort by what he called "voluminous, lurid and distorted reporting."<sup>76</sup>

The fact that television reports were drawn to the negative more than to the positive also affected the relationship between the press and the military. Military men viewed the war in a different way than the correspondents. They saw combat victory after victory, only to be faced with distorted or negative reporting. A very strong hate for the press developed. This hate ranged from officers to enlisted personnel. Phillip Knightley provided two incidents that reflected the attitude and hate members of the military felt towards news correspondents:

An officer remarked to correspondents, My Marines are winning this war and you people are losing it for us in your papers.

An enlisted man, as he watched a jeep load of correspondents drive away is quoted as saying, "Those bastards, I hope they die."<sup>77</sup>

The ill will was not unilateral. The press had developed an aversion for the military, due in part to the credibility

gap. Members of the press felt they had been intentionally misled by senior military leaders. There existed a lack of confidence in the trustworthiness of senior military leaders and an unwillingness to accept the information they provided. The distrust formed during the war and the affect it had on the military and press relationship was best summed up by David Halberstam, a correspondent in Vietnam during the early years of the war. He made the following comment during the 1973 military-media conference at the Naval War College:

Well, we were just as good as you are as Americans. And the way we honored you! Let me tell you something very bluntly. The next time around you're not going to get, I don't think, as much respect from us, because you're no longer going to be heirs of Bradley, and Marshall and Ridgeway. I'm afraid you're going to be the heirs of Westmoreland, Stilwell, Depew and Lovelle, and the system.... We really do our jobs well; and some of us in the past have had a great deal of esteem for you and we hope to see it again.<sup>78</sup>

Halberstam's comments contained two very key truths. First, the military is the heir to the systems method of operating. In general when the Commander in Chief and Congress establish a need at the strategic level to use the military to carry out policy, military leaders are bound by loyalty to follow that strategy. If policy goals are not articulated then the military has difficulty translating the strategy into military operations. Halberstam in a sense articulated the point that those in leadership positions set the agenda for the nature of military media relations. Second, he acknowledged that he hoped the relationship

between the military and the media could return to a pre-Vietnam level.

When the Vietnam War ended there was a deep distrust between the media and military that still exists throughout the military ranks. This is supported by a survey conducted by General Clyde A. Hennies while at the U.S. Army War College. One of General Hennies conclusions was, that most officers are distrustful of the news media and are not confident in that institution's ability to report military events with balance and fairness.<sup>79</sup> Since General Hennies survey was given to senior officers, who had served as role models for junior officers, it can be speculated that their attitudes have been passed on.

Members of America's military forces were not the only ones affected by the television coverage of the Vietnam War. The British military also shared the view that the outcome of the war was severely affected by news coverage. Robert Elegant provided this analysis in a 1982 article for Soldier of Fortune magazine:

For the first time in modern history the outcome of a war was determined not on the battlefield, but on the printed page and above all television screen... Depicting the horror of war on television...was crucial in shifting the emphasis from fact to emotion.<sup>80</sup>

There are arguments against this claim, such as news of casualties, especially pictures, might inspire the masses to a stronger resolve to fight. This is coupled with the belief that if a war is popular then people will support it, but if

it is unpopular people will become more dissatisfied by reports of losses (people or battles). The common perception of the media's role in Vietnam remains that it let the United States down.

This theme was also used by Alan Hooper, a member of the Royal Marines, in assessing the lessons learned from Vietnam on the affect of television on the public. Hooper provides a quote from another analysis. The following was taken from that quote:

Television has a built in bias towards depicting any conflict in terms of the visible brutality.... One wonders if in the future a democracy which has uninhibited television coverage in every home will ever be able to fight a war, however just....If there are a people in the world who are never...going to understand the war in Vietnam it is the Americans.... The war was lost on the television screen of the United States.<sup>81</sup>

The belief that the media was responsible for the outcome of the Vietnam War was a key factor in the British treatment of the press during the Falklands Campaign.

The great divide of distrust and dislike between the press and military continued after Vietnam. The attitudes of many members of the military become a dormant dislike that grew stronger. There was speculation on how the media and the military would interact on future battlefields. One officer related his reason for concern as follows:

Traitorous acts by the Press in and out of Vietnam has resulted in some dangerous talk. I have heard numerous rumblings among several officers that the biggest casualties in the next war will be reporters.<sup>82</sup>

Even with this type attitude existing within the ranks, little was done to close the great divide caused by Vietnam. The military and the press, both armed with misunderstanding and distrust, would await the next military wartime operation. In October 1983, the relationship was again put to the test.

#### COVERAGE OF A SHORT WAR

The historical relationship between the government, the press and the military has always been one of constant fluctuation. The relationship experienced its darkest day during military operations on the island of Grenada in October 1983. Never in the history of warfare involving American military forces had the press ever been totally denied the opportunity to cover military operations. This was the case on 25 October 1983, when American troops landed on Grenada. The relationship that formed as a result of press coverage of the Vietnam War played a major role in the press being denied access to the battlefield. Many government, civilian, and military officials still held deeply ingrained fear and a lack of confidence in the press and its presence on a modern battlefield.<sup>83</sup> It is not the intent of this section to analyze the coverage of the Grenada operation.<sup>84</sup> It will cover some of the elements and events that lead to the government's decision to deny the press access to the battlefield. It will also identify some of the reactions to that decision.

On 20 October 1983, planning began for military operations in Grenada in part to protect U.S. citizens. The planning was very well guarded, with only a few key administration officials involved. The attempt at total secrecy had severe impact on members of the administration's staff. To combat creating a credibility gap as had occurred in Vietnam, key members of the White House staff were denied information on the operation. James Baker, the White House Chief of Staff knew of the operation, but he did not provide the information available to him to Larry Speakes, the White House press spokesman, and his aides. This was done with the belief that those officials routinely dealing with the press would be better off not knowing what was going on than knowing and having to lie to inquiring reporters in order to preserve secrecy.<sup>85</sup> The exclusion of Speakes from the information flow, based on the theory that it was better that way, lead to his lying to the press anyway. This added to the friction building between the government and the press. Speakes was contacted by CBS reporter Bill Plate on 24 October 1983, to confirm the story that Grenada was being invaded. To Plate's query Speakes remarked that the claim was preposterous and that the idea should be knocked down hard.<sup>86</sup> The following day the invasion began.

The road to a credibility gap was being formed, if not intentionally, by ignorance. What amounted to the first lie had been told and the perception was that the government was

attempting to mislead the press, or was engaged in a cover-up. Some of the same practices of Vietnam were creeping into the planning. Government officials were withholding information from each other. The cohesion and confidence that exist in peace were breaking down during wartime operations. In the case of the Speakes incident, it is speculated that he would have been better able to function as the press spokesman if he has been fully informed.

In the early planning by the military no plans were made to accommodate the press during the operation. General John W. Vessey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has been labeled responsible for the exclusion of the press from the Grenada operation. His belief was that the military could not easily carry out the Grenada operation with the press and television along to worry unit commanders. He passed that information on to President Reagan.<sup>87</sup>

The nature of press operations in Vietnam also had an impact on the president's decision to allow the press to be excluded. This is reflected by a comment he made months after the invasion, when he stated that the press was not on our side militarily during the Vietnam War.<sup>88</sup>

The plans submitted for the invasion of Grenada were approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, even though they called for total exclusion of the press during the operation. Because no plans were made for the press, there were no arrangements for accreditation or exchange of information.

The military had full control of the dissemination of information. One key observation to this is that military public affairs officers were not involved in the planning, therefore a press plan was not made. The execution of the Grenada operation marked the first time that plans were made to intentionally deny the press the opportunity to cover a wartime military operation involving American troops.

The press was finally allowed to enter Grenada on the third day. Those who entered were part of a pool of reporters selected from a large body waiting in Bridgetown, Barbados. They were briefed by the task force commander and provided resources to support them in covering the war. They were escorted around the island, briefed, and shown evidence of military operations in progress. By 30 October 1983, there were three hundred journalists in Grenada. The fear of television and its impact on the modern battlefield still persisted. This is supported by the decision to bar a television team equipped with ground satellite equipment for broadcast back to the United States from the island. For the first two days of the invasion television visuals were controlled by the Pentagon.<sup>89</sup>

The exclusion of the press from Grenada drew extreme reactions from all areas of America. Les Janke, the Deputy White House Press Secretary for Foreign Affairs, resigned as a reaction to the treatment of the press during the Grenada operation. Many protests by members of the press

were published concerning the government's exclusion of the press.<sup>90</sup> The American Society of Newspaper Editors sent their protest to the Secretary of Defense. It was as follows.

We object to the Defense Department's failure to honor the long tradition of on-the-scene coverage of American military operation. The Press landed with United troops in Normandy on D-Day in 1944. Time and again in both Korea and Vietnam reporters were able to give the American public first hand accounts from the front. In this case, however, it was more than 48 hours before pool reporters were allowed in. We believe that the Defense Department had let down the American people.<sup>91</sup>

Many members of the press were deeply disturbed by the government's decision to exclude them from covering the invasion.<sup>92</sup>

Probably the most severe action taken as a result of the government and press relationship in Grenada took place in Congress. Several congressmen sponsored a resolution in the House of Representative calling for presidential impeachment proceedings. They felt that President Reagan should be impeached for preventing news coverage of the Grenada invasion.<sup>93</sup> The resolution gained no support and died without action. The President had the full support of the American people for the actions he had taken.

Another issue that caused concern to members of the press was the attitude of the public concerning their exclusion from Grenada. A survey in the Marine Corps Gazette in November 1984, showed that ninety percent of those polled agreed with the decision to bar the press. Similar results

were concluded by a Los Angeles Times poll.<sup>94</sup> That showed that 52 percent of the people polled from around the nation supported the press blackout in Grenada. The press further came under suspicion, because most Americans viewed Grenada as a total military success, and the press, once given access, published several skeptical reports. The attitude of the public as perceived by the press is best summed up by this quote from the New York Times:

The most astounding thing about the Grenada situation was the quick, facile assumption by some of the public that the press wanted to get in, not to witness the invasion on behalf of the public but to sabotage it.<sup>95</sup>

The press was the victim of the post-Vietnam school of thought that it played a key role in the negative outcome of the war. The attitude not only existed in government channels, it was also present with the people. The press suffered a setback in covering military wartime operations. It had also suffered a threat to its credibility and continued freedom to cover military operations.

Members of the press were very concerned over the precedent set by the government in relation to the press in Grenada. The concern was reinforced by a statement made by James Baker, White House Chief of Staff, who stated: "Under similar circumstances, we would behave the same way."<sup>96</sup> His attitude was not to be accepted and drew scrutiny from media as well as government officials. Edward Joyce, president of CBS news, expressed his concerns as follows:

I am seriously concerned that we may indeed be witnessing the dawn of a new era of censorship, of manipulation of the press, of considering the media the handmaiden of government to spoon feed the public.... If the government is permitted to obrogate the First Amendment at will...I am concerned that such action will be taken again and again and again, whenever a government wishes to keep the public in the dark!<sup>97</sup>

The concerns held by Joyce were shared by many members of Congress including Edward Kennedy and Charles Hayes. The Administration was split on the issue and a need for resolution existed.

In order to seek resolution, there was a need to identify the motive behind the government and military decision to exclude the press from the operation. The most prominent reasons given for excluding the press from Grenada were secrecy and fear for reporter safety. The argument concerning the safety of reporters was quickly dissolved. The press had operated in war zones throughout the country's history. Many had died on the battlefield while carrying out their duty to inform the people. Representative Charles Hayes of Illinois, in an address to the House, placed the need of the people to be informed above the safety of reporters. In his address he stated:

The survival of our right to be informed through our own free press may well be worth whatever risks such assignments may bring to our newspeople.<sup>98</sup>

Hayes captured the essences of a great parallel between the military and the press. Each has a job to do during war that is of vast importance to the American society. To do that

job means serving in places and taking part in events that could result in loss of life but that satisfy a greater good.

The argument over the need for secrecy and security during military operations was not easily resolved. It has always been an area of concern between the military and the press during war. These two elements are essential parts of military operations. Because of the distrust that exists between the press and the military, many misunderstandings have developed. What the military calls secrecy the press calls a coverup. The more the military attempts to conceal as secret, the greater the press effort to reveal the issues. Military leaders at all levels voiced the position that the press blackout of Grenada was due to security and secrecy. And though this had been a historical concern, few incidents have occurred in which a press report had compromised the security of a military operation during war.

When all evaluations were completed the decision to blackout the press from Grenada had fully identified a need for better government, press, and military relations. The public though supportive of the blackout, was two-to-one against that practice serving as a precedent for the future. The public showed a four-to-one belief that journalists perform a necessary service in reporting from the front.<sup>99</sup> In response to the criticism and concerns raised by members of the press, government officials, and the military, General John W. Vessey, Jr. on 4 November 1983, announced a plan to

resolve the issues. General Vessey's own concern for the relationship between the military and the press on the battlefield is reflected in this question he posed:

How do we conduct military operations in a manner that safeguards the lives of our military and protects the security of the operation while keeping the American public informed through the media?<sup>100</sup>

He took the initiative to get an answer to his question.

General Vessey's initiative was to find a solution to the adversarial relationship between the military and the media.

He recognized the need for the two to operate on the

battlefield in unison, without presenting a threat to the value of military secrecy and the requirement for openness by the press. His effort was a giant step in bridging the gap that had developed over time between the military and the press.

## ENDNOTES

1. The statistical trend reflecting the increasing number of television in American homes is outlined by each author. Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty, (1975), p. 412. This book indicated that during the Korean War there were 10 million television in American homes and by the peak of Vietnam the number had grown to 100 million. In, Susan D. Moeller, Shooting War, (1989), p. 303, it is cited that by 1952, more than 34 percent of American homes contained a television, an approximate total of 15 million sets. By the end of the decade, she cited that 86 percent of the homes in America had a television set. Moeller's figures differ slightly from those presented by Knightley; however, both reflect the rapid growth trend for television as a broadcast medium. This trend is further supported by J. Fred MacDonald, Television and the Red Menace, (1985), p. 147. MacDonald cites the percentage of homes in America by 1960 to have television at 89.4 percent.

2. MacDonald, p. 148. In the Roper poll respondents were asked to rate the quality of the job being done by social institutions. Television was rated below schools and newspapers; each showing that 64 percent of the respondents felt that both were doing a good to excellent job. On rating television 57 percent of the respondents felt that television was doing excellent to good.

3. MacDonald, p. 148, The data cited by MacDonald was taken from Variety, Dec 23, 1959, p. 39 and Broadcasting, Feb 12, 1962, p. 27-29. This information also applies to the preceding endnote.

4. The domino theory was an argument used to rally support for continued American involvement in Vietnam. It asserted that if South Vietnam, fell into communist hands then all of its neighboring countries would also fall.

5. Knightley, p.374.

6. Knightley, p.375.

7. The term credibility gap was coined to avoid the open expression that the government (President) was lying.

8. MacDonald, P. 176.

9. John E. Mueller, "Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam, The American Political Science Review, (1971). p 365.

10. MacDonald, p. 179. Frank M. Stanton was president of CBS and also a trustee and chairman of the RAND Corporation. The RAND Corporation is a government-supported think tank, once described as an annex to the Pentagon. Robert E. Kintner was the president of NBC. When he left NBC in 1966, he accepted President Johnson's appointment as special assistant to the president.

11. The Tonkin Gulf Resolution gave President Johnson the functional equivalent of a declaration of War. It empowered the President to use all means necessary in reaction to North Vietnam's aggression against American Forces. The resolution stemmed from an incident in the Tonkin Gulf. It was alleged that two U.S. Naval vessels were attacked there by North Vietnamese forces.

12. Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History, The First Complete Account of Vietnam at "War, (1983) p. 22.

13. Knightly, p. 398. This figure was also quoted in, Alan Hooper, The Military and the Media, (1982) p. 109.

14. This quote is taken from a classroom presentation presented by LTC John Garlinger, the Public Affairs Officer at Fort Leavenworth, Ks. The presentation on the Historical Perspective of Military and the Media was present during the CGSOC elective course, The Military and the Media, (A032).

15. Hazel Erskine, The Polls: Information Policy, The Public Opinion Quarterly.

16. Daniel C. Hallin, The Uncensored War: The Media in Vietnam, (1986), p.106.

17. H. Bruce Franklin, Jane Franklin, Marvin E. Gettleman and Marilyn Young, Vietnam and America: A Documented History, (1985) p. 335.

18. Gloom and Doom - this was a description given to the slant of reporting that emphasized the continuous theme that America or its allies stood on the verge of defeat. This was in contrast to pre - 1968 coverage.

19. Kolko. p.308. The figures quoted here are further supported in Franklin, Franklin, Gettleman and Young. p.361 and Peter Braestrup, The Big Story, vol. 1 (1977) p.139.

20. For the interested reader. The events surrounding the development of this assault can be obtained from the following sources. Steve Cohen, Vietnam: Anthology and Guide to a Television History, 1983, p.205-207. This book presents a news report by CBS News correspondent Robert Schakne. In

this report the data stating that elements of a Viet Cong terror squad occupied part of the building is incorrect. This claim is dispelled in Braestrup. p.xxvi (vol 1). Braestrup also carries an account of the assault on page 136 (vol 1), as reported by Chet Huntley of NBC which mistakenly reported the Viet Cong inside the Embassy. Braestrup gives some evidence as to how the confusion resulted on page 93 (vol. 1). Another account is given in Clark Dougan and Stephen Weiss, Nineteen Sixty-Eight: The Vietnam Experience, 1983, p.14. - This account gives support to how confusion led to reports of Vietcong in the Embassy. For a more detail report that supports Braestrup's account of no Viet Cong entering the Embassy see, Edgar O'Ballance, The Wars in Vietnam, 1954-1973, (1975) p.121. Actual film footage can be seen in volume 7, Tet: 1968, the PBS film series Vietnam: A Television History.

21. Footage of the fighting in Saigon during the Tet Offensive can be viewed in Part 7 of the Vietnam: A History film series. The title of part 7 is Tet.

22. Karnow, p. 526.

23. Clark Dougan and Stephen Weiss, editors, Nineteen Sixty-Eight: The Vietnam Experience, 1983, p.66. It is put forth that Cronkite was very shaken by the coverage during Tet to the point of taking a position against the war. Later news reports from him on Tet reflects his position. Content of his reports are located in Braestrup volume 1, page 156, volume 2, page 180 and Cohen page 214.

24. Braestrup. p.136. This report had its origin from military police involved in the action. Reporters considered the military police the official source on the scene and reported their stories. It would be informative to the reader to review the entire third chapter in volume one of this source.

25. Braestrup, 141.

26. Braestrup, 96.

27. Braestrup, 138 and 158.

28. Robert W. Crawford, Call Retreat: The Johnson Administrations Vietnam Policy March 1967 to March 1968, 1987, p.16.

29. Braestrup, 156.

30. Braestrup, 513.

31. Braestrup, 451.
32. Edgar O'Balance, The Wars in Vietnam 1954-1973, 1975, p.128.
33. O'Ballance, p.127.
34. O'Ballance, p.130.
35. Edward Jay Epstein, Between Fact and Fiction: The Problem of Journalism, 1975, p.222. The assertion made is also supported in Karnow, p.547.
36. Karnow, p.547.
37. Braestrup, p. 157. Cronkite's use of the word pathetic to describe South Vietnam indicates to the author a level of discontent with regard to his view of the country or its leadership. This could have been his expression of his internal belief that the price being paid was now too high for the goods to be gained. This is only speculation.
38. Braestrup. vol 2, p.180, contains the full transcript of Cronkite's report.
39. Braestrup, p.159.
40. Cohen, p.219
41. The members of the media on the scene of this incident were, Howard Tuckner (correspondent), two South Vietnamese brothers, Vo Huynh and Vo Sun (cameramen), soundman Le Phue Dinh all of NBC, and Edie Adams who received a Pulitzer Prize for his still photography of the shooting.
42. Braestrup, vol. 2, p.266. A complete account of the incident is given by Braestrup in this volume. An excerpt can be found in Dougan and Weiss, p.65.
43. Braestrup, vol.2, p.274.
44. Braestrup, p.464.
45. Braestrup, vol. 2, p.276
46. Karnow, p.548. The optimism that McPherson spoke of was the results of a public relations drive ordered by President Johnson to reassure the public that the situation was under control. From a military standpoint the situation was under control, however the political situation was still unclear. (Karnow p.547)

47. Braestrup, vol. 2, p.269.

48. Braestrup, p. 465.

49. Siege as defined in the Random House College Dictionary is the act or process of surrounding and attacking a fortified place in such a way as to isolate it from help and supplies, thereby making capture possible. It could not be determined why or how the situation at the Khe Sanh was called a siege. Though it may have been surrounded and under attack it was never cut off from help or supplies. It is suspected that this was a way to present the situation as perilous.

50. Robert Pisor, The End of the Line: The Siege of Khe Sanh, (1982), provides an excellent account of the events that spanned the seventy-seven day battle at Khe Sanh.

51. Braestrup, p.385.

52. Braestrup, p.403.

53. Braestrup, p.345.

54. Karnow, p.541.

55. Pisor, p.139. Westmoreland was aware of the possibilities that the North Vietnamese might attempt a Dienbienphu type operation. His analysis of the situation, as presented by Pisor, fully weighed the situation, Westmoreland placed his confidence in the superior firepower available in the defense of Khe Sanh. Because of continued criticism he would order Colonel Reamer Argo, the command historian, to look closely at Dienbienphu and other historic sieges to determine all possible tactics the communist might use against Khe Sanh.

56. Karnow, p.541.

57. Pisor, p.138.

58. Karnow, p.542.

59. Braestrup, p.383.

60. Braestrup, p.389, Braestrup points out that the claim, that leaders in Vietnam were not certain about the ability to hold at Khe Sanh, was related to continuous citing of the infantry adage "any defensive position can be taken if the attacker is willing to pay the price."

61. This statement is based upon servicemember responses to interviews conducted by newsmen on the scene. Braestrup, p.

62. Braestrup, p. 383.
63. Braestrup, p. 393. This claim by Garlnick is easily found to be false, by examining the chart in appendix H.
64. "the rest" this was a way of acknowledging the presence of a South Vietnamese Ranger Battalion (37th ARVN) without stating that they were fighting there. In fact the Rangers fought off most of the ground assaults launched against the base. Little mention was made of this in the news. Only one film report on the Rangers at the Khe Sanh siege was shown on an evening news show (Braestrup, p.396).
65. Braestrup, p.395.
66. Moeller, p.335.
67. Braestrup, p.42.
68. Epstein, Fact and Fiction, 1975, p.224.
69. Epstein, p.225.
70. Moeller, p. 352.
71. Epstein, p.226. Epstein described the shift at Tet as changing radically to stories of chaos, confusion and near collapse.
72. Hallin, p.161.
73. Epstein, p.232.
74. Hallin, p.108.
75. Hallin, p.108. On page 168, Hallin refers to a statement by David Halberstam, who stated This was the first time in history a war was declared over by an anchorman. That statement refers to this incident.
76. Karnow, p.545.
77. Knightley, p.405.
78. Jergen A. Jeise, Minimum Disclosure, 1979, p.164.
79. Clyde A. Hennies, Public Affairs Training for The Army's Officer Corps: Need or Neglect?, 1983, p.44.
80. Valerie Adams, The Media and the Falklands Campaign, 1986, p.37. This quote was taken from an article by Robert

Elegant, 'Word War: Vietnam lost on front pages but not on the front lines, 'Soldier of Fortune, December 1982.

81. Alan Hooper, The Military and the Media, 1982, p.116.

82. Vijay Tiwathia, The Grenada War, 1987, p.150. This quote was cited by Robert A. Aspery, War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History, 1975, p.1519.

83. Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on the Military and the Media, Battle Lines, 1985, p.69.

84. For an account of what took place the reader can consult, Battle Lines and the Grenada War by Vijay Tiwathia. It is pointed out however that Tiwathia's accounts of events are somewhat slanted.

85. Battle Lines, p.87.

86. Battle Lines, p.89.

87. Battle Lines, p.90.

88. TIWATHIA, p.151. This statement is contained in a New York Times Magazine article by Drew Middleton, titled "Barring Reporters from the Battlefield," in February 1984.

89. TIWATHIS, p.154.

90. TIWATHIS, p.155. Some examples were Howard Simmons, managing editor of the Washington Post and article in the New York Times and the Christian Science Monitor.

91. Tiwathia, p.156. This protest was published in the New York Times on 1 Nov 83 under the title "Editors Protest to Pentagon Over Press Curbs in Grenada."

92. For additional protest filed by members of the press its recommended that the interested reader consult Battle Lines, Chapter 7.

93. TIWATHIA, p.156. The record of this action in the Congressional Records, vol. cxxx, No. 3, 14 Mar, 1984, p.E-1013 and 21 May 1984, p.H4206.

94. Battle Lines, p.119.

95. TIWATHIA, p.155.

96. Battle Lines, p.119.

97. Battle Lines, p.117.

98. Battle Lines, p.117.

99. Battle Lines, p.119. This is shown in results from the Los Angeles Times survey conducted 12-17 Nov 83.

100. Garlinger, classroom presentation.

## CHAPTER 6

### EFFORTS TO IMPROVE MILITARY AND MEDIA RELATIONS

An uneasy relationship between the military and the media has existed throughout modern war. Phillip Knightley in his book First Casualty provides clear evidence to support this claim. In the history of the United States and its involvement in war, there has been a continuous effort to improve the military and media relationship. In the early wars of this century many control measures were used to keep the press in line with official reports. Some of these were censorship, the Trading with the Enemy Act and the Sedition Act. These controls were viewed as unacceptable over a long period of time.

As the United States moved from World War I to Vietnam, the controls were by then nonexistent. Without controls and with limited understanding the Vietnam War was covered. Out of this war emerged a military and press that held deep rooted feelings of distrust and lack of understanding. The relationship remained tense up to the invasion of Grenada. The deep rooted feeling harbored from Vietnam and the military's desire for secrecy resulted in a total press blackout of the invasion. This action so widened the gap in the relationship it became clear that the issue required immediate and formal attention. In writing about his experience in Vietnam General Westmoreland presented the following on military media relations:

It may well be that between press and officials there is an inherent, built-in conflict of interest. There is something to be said for both sides, but when the nation is at war and men's lives are at stake, there should be no ambiguity.<sup>1</sup>

Westmoreland's statement reflects the same thoughts of General Vessey following the operation in Grenada.

The initiative undertaken by General Vessey following the press blackout of Grenada set the future procedures of military and the press during war. The government's action in handling the press during Grenada was highly criticized by members of the media and many government officials. The concerns raised required immediate attention. General Vessey's response was to name a retired Army general, Winant Sidle, who had served as a military information officer in Vietnam, to serve as head of a panel to deal with the problem. This was done on 4 November 1983 and in that same month the Secretary of Defense, Caspar W. Weinberger, approved the fourteen military officers and seven members from the media. The members of the panel are identified in appendix I.

The panel was told to develop guidelines for press coverage of future military operations. The aim was to bring together members of the media and military to exchange values and views for the purpose of formulating procedures for bridging the gap between the military and the press during war. A factor to be overcome by the panel was that continued mutual distrust and poor understanding was not in the best interest of the military, the press, or the American public.

The panel obtained information from nineteen representatives of major newspapers, magazines, wire services, television networks, and professional associations as well as three representatives from the military public affairs and information offices.<sup>2</sup> The information was compiled and analyzed. From the information available the panel developed eight recommendations. The content of the panel recommendations are located in appendix I.

The recommendations of the panel reflected a solid compromise between the needs of the military and the media. The recommendations fully incorporated the concepts contained in the Department of Defense's Principles of Information and the media's Statement of Principle on Press Access to Military Operations.<sup>3</sup> The report of the Sidel Panel was reviewed by Pentagon Chief Spokesman, Michael I. Burch, and the Secretary of Defense and was released on 23 August 1984. Burch was given the task of implementing the recommendations of the Sidel report. The recommendations collectively provided for maximum news coverage of military operations while preserving security. His first action was in response to recommendation number two, which called for, if necessary, the formation of a press pool to cover military operation.

The first elements were determining the composition of the pool and developing guidelines for pool operations. Burch held meetings with members of the media to arrive at how this would be done. The agreement reached was for the pool to

consist of eleven members. The agreed pools composition is one wire reporter and photographer, one television correspondent with camera and sound crew, one magazine reporter and photographer, one radio reporter, and three newspaper reporters. The ground rules for the members of the pool are at appendix K. The rules include those of the Defense Department and those developed by news organizations within the pool.

The press pool concept has been exercised many time since publication of the Sidle Panel's report. The very first press pool operation did not go very well, but served as a point of departure for planning future operations. The press pool concept has been exercised seven times to date. Each time the concept was exercised it proved more and more feasible and successful. Appendix L provides a summary of media pool operations with to some of he lessons learned.

Though a very important element of ensuring the presence of the media during military operations, the media pool concept has its drawbacks. First there is a logistics problem because each member of the pool, based on his medium requires different data. Each must be channeled towards situations that best suites the delivering medium. Television reports and crews need action while wire service can make due with still photos. To meet the needs of the pool requires manpower and resources from the unit being covered. This provides a point for possible friction when military

operational requirements impair the commander's ability to meet the needs of the media. Second, the press pool concept allows for early coverage of military operations by the American press but has no control over freelance reporters or foreign correspondents. Members of the press pool will be provided support by the military and given firsthand information concerning military operations. They are not guaranteed to be on the scene where action is occurring. It is speculated that the media is not going to sit back and expect pool members to cover a war. It can be argued that the pool concept will prompt the media to seek expanded coverage through the use of freelance and foreign correspondents. There is, however, the concept that the pool be put together early and dissolved quickly. This allows for expansion of correspondents in the area with pool members still being given military support. The pool concept is only worthwhile where isolation prevents others in the press access to the military area of operation. This idea is based on the availability of information from established press centers to other media members who may be present. Yet, even with these drawbacks the concept of a press pool has proven to be both feasible and valuable. It also provides the guarantee that when the military arrives on future battlefields the press will be there also. The press will be there not as a lap dog or an attack dog, but as a watchdog,<sup>4</sup> providing the public with accounts of the military in action.

One other recommendation that goes along with the formation of press pools is the requirement for early planning of press support. This recommendation requires that public affairs and media support planning be performed in conjunction with operational planning. This type planning allows for addressing public affairs issues and ensures that the operation can be adequately presented to inform the American public. The requirement also cuts down on incidents that could cause a credibility gap to form, similar to the Speakes incident concerning the invasion of Grenada. It provides for the public affairs officer to be knowledgeable about upcoming operations. The more knowledgeable the public affairs officer is of planned operations the better equipped he is to perform his duties.

Probably the most important of all the recommendations is the one calling for improved media-military understanding and cooperation. Without these elements all other recommendations could be seriously hampered. Fortunately, the situation that led to the formation of the Sidle panel fully amplified this matter. Even before this recommendation was made there were schools that existed to train military members to deal effectively with the press. This however was focused on a small body of military members preparing to serve as public affairs. The responsibility of media understanding and interaction was channeled in the direction of the public affairs officer. The need for expanded education for the

military in dealing with the media was pointed out by Brigadier General Clyde A. Hennies in a survey conducted at the U.S. Army War College. One of his conclusions was that training and education should be mandatory at the beginning of an officer's career and should be offered at each level of the military education system.<sup>5</sup> The military has responded to the recommendation for improved military-media relations by including classes on the subject in the curricula of the education programs at the staff college and war college level. There are plans underway to include some training at the basic and advanced officer course level.

The military is not alone in undertaking efforts to better military-media relations through education. At Boston University Dean H. Hoachim Maitre in an effort to train what he calls a knowledgeable defense journalist<sup>6</sup> established the Center for Defense Journalism. Its goal is to bring together reporters and military leaders to improve defense reporting and to foster mutual understanding. The program has come under attack and is viewed with skepticism by members of the media. Some view it as a method of creating sentiments in the media that would be pro-defense. The real point to be considered is that the center provides another area of interaction between the press and the military in moving toward improved relations. As in all endeavors of this type there will be skeptics and supporters and each should weigh the long term value of such a program. Harvey Simon, author

of the article on the journalism program at Boston University, points out that Dean Maitre's efforts had received praise for taking the initiative to fill the void that existed in journalistic education in the area of defense.<sup>7</sup> The initiative on Maitre's behalf to set up a program of this nature serves as a good example that the road to improved military-media relations rests in interaction and education.

The educational programs set up by both the military and civilian institutions serves the best interests of the public. The interaction aids the military in presenting to the public the rapid developments in military technology and defense strategic aims. It can kindle the press' understanding of the defense arena and amplify the need to get all sides of the defense story told. This will aid in showing that the goal of defense is deterrence, not war. It is therefore important that the press and military operation with a good understanding to better serve the nation and the people. The nature of the relationship between the military and the press has undergone some improvements. With the recommendations of the Sidle Panel serving as a basis for future development, it can continue to get better over time. The nature of the relationship in the future is dependent on continued, consistent interactions to bring about a better understanding. Though the relationship today may not be what it could be, it is by far better than what it has been.

## CONCLUSION

The adversarial relationship between the military and the press was shown in chapter three as existing in all wars in this century. That chapter identified the actions taken by the government to incorporate the press into the nation's arsenal of democracy. As technology in reporting improved, the control measures used by the government diminished. In the early wars of the century the print media and radio was incorporated effectively into the American war effort. By the beginning of the 1960's, the medium of television rapidly outdistanced the other mediums in bringing news to the American public. It was the medium of television that was available to cover the war in Vietnam. It was not so much the medium itself that caused a deterioration in the media-military relation, but how it was used.

Chapter four points out some of the problems and limitation that hinder television in effectively covering wartime events. It shows some controls that exist to prevent the news networks from presenting biased coverage and that in the case of Vietnam the controls were ignored. Chapter five provides examples of how television was used to present elements of the Vietnam War that were highly distorted and in some cases incorrect. The trend results provided by different polls on the American involvement in Vietnam closely followed the media line of coverage. In the early stages of the war the public showed support as the media provided favorable

reports. As the press coverage changed to negative so did the support of the public. Of this phenomena Michael Parenti provided the following observation.

The media set the limits of public discourse and public understanding. They may not mold public opinion but they do not always have to. It is enough that they create opinion visibility, giving legitimacy to certain views and illegitimacy to others.<sup>8</sup>

This statement parallels that of Abraham Lincoln on the power of the force that can shape public opinion. The point Parenti makes on the press giving legitimacy or illegitimacy to an issue is representative of the editorial process in presenting television news. The selectivity and packaging process in network news broadcasting gives the power to a small group to set public discourse. The fear created by this power and the evidence on how television was used to cover the Vietnam war provides clear reason for concern. This concerns led to a total press blackout during the invasion of Grenada. The blackout made it immediately clear that efforts must be taken to improve the relationship between the military and the media. The recommendation of the Sidle Panel captured all the fundamental problems in the relationship. The recommendations only dealt with the issues of understanding and trust. They did not fully deal with the use of particular media in war to tell the story. Members of the military are left with the belief that at the good judgment of a journalist will prevail and coverage will be balanced and fair.

Members of the military should be concerned about television coverage of military operations. With improved technology correspondents on the battlefield are able to transmit realtime television pictures via satellite to a mass audience as rapidly as information can be passed over communication nets. This information is susceptible to intercept by enemy intelligence collecting assets. The potential damage this could cause is yet unknown. The major concern over television coverage of military operations is not in the area of security. Over the years it has been shown that the military can preserve operational security while news correspondents continued to cover operations. This will be reinforced through mutual understanding and education in line with the Sidle Panel's recommendation.

The major concern over television coverage of military operations rests in the use of the film footage. The improved relationship between the American press and the military may serve to curtail the distortion or manipulation of film footage. This does not, however, affect members of the foreign media. They are free to manipulate the news in any way necessary to further their political ends. Coverage of military operations presented by news networks can be biased or distorted. This occurs due to the time constraints and the editorial process in presenting the news. The manipulation of film footage to support a narrative position further distorts the news. These elements of bias, distortion and

manipulation can be combined and misrepresent the efforts and progress of the military on the battlefield. Manipulated or distorted footage can be used to destroy credibility, encourage disapproval of operation and cause a division between international allies. Each of these elements have the potential to disrupt or misrepresent military operations and are reasons for concern by members of the military.

## ENDNOTES

1. William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, 1976, p.422.
2. Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on the Military and the Media, Battle Line, 1985, p.124.
3. Both the Department of Defense's "Principles of Information" and the "Media's Statement of Principle on Press Access to Military Operations" were drawn up as a result of the Grenada press black out. The Principles of Information were drawn up by the Secretary of Defense and was released in December 1983. The Statement of Principle on Press Access to Military Operations was drawn up by a ad hoc journalist committee to explain and restore traditional media-military relations. Above all the committee was seeking assurance that journalist would never again be barred from the battlefield.
4. ViJay Tiwathia, The Grenada War, 1987, p.159.
5. Clyde A. Hennies, Public Affairs Training for the Army's Officers Corps - Need or Neglect?, 1983, p.44.
6. Harvey Simon, New at BU: Defense Journalism, Washington Journalism Review, p.8.
7. Simon, p.8.
8. Michael Parenti, Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media, 1986, p.23.

**APPENDIX A - OPPOSITION TO VIETNAM**

## APPENDIX A

Edith Efron used this data in part to determine presence of bias in television coverage of Vietnam. It is pertinent to this study, in showing opposition to the policy on the war in 1968. The reader should pay attention to the positions of the individuals and groups who opposed the war. The contents of the television reports did not represent the average American. It reflected the views of the elite and the educated. This alone had its impact on the country's leadership.

### ANTI-LBJ Vietnam War Policy

#### SOURCE OF OPINION

#### ABC

Public	Peace demonstrators oppose the war.
Public	Students oppose the war.
Public	Students oppose the war
Editorial	Reporter opposes the war.
Political	Senator Fulbright opposes the war.
Political	Senator Fulbright opposes the war.
Political	O'Dwyer opposes the war
Political	Senator Jacob Javits opposes the war.
Political	Paul O'Dwyer opposes the war.
Political	Javits opposes the war.
Political	Paul O'Dwyer opposes the war
Public	Nine pacifists oppose the war.
Public	Hecklers oppose the war.
Public	Demonstrators oppose the war.
Editorial	Reporter opposes the war.
Political	Senator Fulbright opposes the war.
Public	Soldiers oppose the war.
Public	Soldiers oppose the war.
Public	Soldiers oppose the war.
Public	Soldiers oppose the war.
Public	Soldiers oppose the war.
Public	Soldiers oppose the war.
Foreign	Tokyo students oppose the war.
Political	Dick Gregory opposes the war.
Foreign	Actress Vanessa Redgrave opposes the war
Political	Socialist Workers Party opposes the war.
Political	Peace and Freedom Party opposes the war.
Political	Freedom and Peace Party opposes the war.
Political	Socialist Labor Party opposes the war.
Political	Communist Party opposes the war.
Editorial	Reporter opposes the war.
Public	Black militants oppose the war.

#### CBS

Editorial	Reporter opposes the war.
Political	Ohio Senate candidate John Gilligan opposes the war

Public Leaders of Chicago demonstrators oppose the war.  
 Public Demonstrators oppose the war.  
 Public Hecklers oppose the war.  
 Public Students oppose the war.  
 Political George Ball opposes the war.  
 Editorial Reporter opposes the war.  
 Public Demonstrators oppose the war.  
 Public Students oppose the war.  
 Public Organizer of Chicago convention disorder opposes the war.  
 Political Senate doves oppose the war.  
 Political Senator Morse opposes the war.  
 Editorial Reporter opposes the war.  
 Political Eldridge Cleaver opposes the war.  
 Political Socialist Labor candidate opposes the war.  
 Political Socialist candidate opposes the war.  
 Political Socialist Worker Party candidate opposes the war

NBC

Public Connecticut matron opposes the war.  
 Public Students oppose the war.  
 Public Columbia student opposes the war.  
 Public Demonstrators oppose the war.  
 Public Demonstrators oppose the war.  
 Editorial Reporter opposes the war.  
 Public Protest leader opposes the war.  
 Public Soldier opposes the war.  
 Foreign Japanese leftist students oppose the war.  
 Public SDS head Tom Hayden opposes the war.  
 Public President of Yale opposes the war.  
 Public Artists oppose the war.  
 Foreign British demonstrators oppose the war.

SOURCE: Edith Efron, The News Twisters, 1969.

**APPENDIX B - 20TH CENTURY FUND TASK FORCE MEMBERS**

## Appendix B

### 20th Century Fund Task Force Members

Edward N. Costikyan, Chairman  
Partner; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison, New York

Charles Corddry  
Defense Correspondent, the Baltimore Sun.

Shelby Foote  
Author, South Memphis, Tennessee.

Edward M. Fouhy  
Executive Producer, NBC Network News, Washington, D.C.

Jerry Friedheim  
Executive Vice President, American News Paper Publishers Association, Reston, Virginia.

Roswell Gilpatric  
Partner, Cravath, Swaine and Moore, New York; former Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault  
National Correspondent, MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour, New York.

Samuel P. Huntington  
Eaton Professor of the Science of Government and Director, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University.

Robert Murray  
Lecturer in Public Policy and Director of National Security Programs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr.  
General Douglas MacArthur Chair of Military Research, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

Craig R. Whitney  
Assistant Managing Editor The New York Times.

Admiral Elmo Zumwalt  
President, Admiral Zumwalt and Associates, Inc., Arlington Virginia; former Chief of Naval Operations and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Peter Braestrup, reporter  
Editor, Wilson Quarterly.

SOURCE: BATTLE LINES: Report of the Twentieth Center Fund Task Force on the Military and the Media.

**APPENDIX C - EXCERPTS FROM THE TELEVISION CODE**

## APPENDIX C

### "Excerpts From The Television Code"

#### V. Treatment of News and Public Events

##### News

1. A television station's news schedule should be adequate and well-balanced.

2. News reporting should be factual, fair and without bias.

3. A Television broadcaster should exercise particular discrimination in the acceptance, placement and presentation of advertising in news programs so that such advertising should be clearly distinguishable from the news content.

4. At all time, pictorial and verbal material for both news and comment should conform to other sections of these standards, wherever such sections are reasonably applicable.

5. Good taste should prevail in the selection and handling of news: Morbid, sensational or alarming details not essential to the factual report, especially in connection with stories of crime or sex, should be avoided. News should be telecast in such a manner as to avoid panic and unnecessary alarm.

6. Commentary and analysis should be clearly identified as such.

7. Pictorial material should be chosen with care and not presented in a misleading manner.

8. All news interview programs should be governed by accepted standards of ethical journalism, under which the interviewer selects the questions to be asked. Where there is advance agreement materially restricting an important or newsworthy area of questioning, the interviewer will state on the program that such limitation has been agreed upon. Such disclosure should be made if the person being interviewed requires that questions be submitted in advance or if he participates in editing a recording of the interview prior to its use on the air.

9. A television broadcaster should exercise due care in his supervision of content, format, and presentation of newscasts originated by his station, and in his selection of newscasters, commentators, and analysts.

## Public Events

1. A television broadcaster has an affirmative responsibility at all times to be informed of public events, and to provide coverage consonant with the ends of an informed and enlightened citizenry.

2. The treatment of such events by a television broadcaster should provide adequate and informed coverage.

## VI. Controversial Public Issues.

1. Television provides a valuable forum for the expression of responsible views on public issues of a controversial nature. The television broadcaster should seek out and develop with accountable individuals, groups and organization, programs relating to controversial public issues of import to his fellow citizens; and give fair representation to opposing sides of issues which materially affect the life or welfare of a substantial segment of the public.

2. Requests by individuals, groups or organization for time to discuss their views on controversial public issues, should be considered on the basis of their individual merits, and in the light of the contribution which the use requested would make to the public interest, and to a well-balanced program structure.

3. Programs devoted to the discussion of controversial public issues should be identified as such. They should not be presented in a manner which would mislead listeners or viewers to believe that the program is purely of an entertainment, news, or other character.

4. Broadcasts in which stations express their own opinions about issues of general public interest should be clearly identified as editorials. They should be unmistakably identified as statements of station opinion and should be appropriately distinguished from news and other program material.

## VII. Political Telecasts

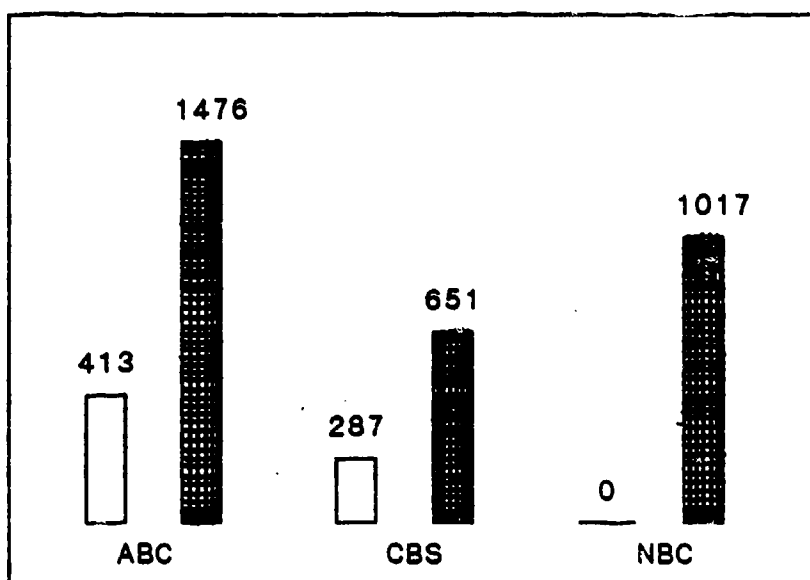
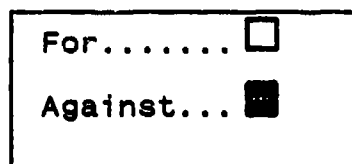
1. Political telecasts should be clearly identified as such. They should not be presented by a television broadcaster in a manner which would mislead listeners or viewers to believe that the program is of any other character.

Source: William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication, 1969, p.262-263.

**APPENDIX D - CONTENT OF NETWORKS NEWS  
BROADCAST ON VIETNAM**

## APPENDIX D

The data displayed herein reflects the content of news broadcasted by the major networks on the Vietnam War. The broadcast are from the 1968 post Tet period. The results cover three areas: U.S. Policy on the war, Policy on the bombing halt and coverage of the Vietcong.

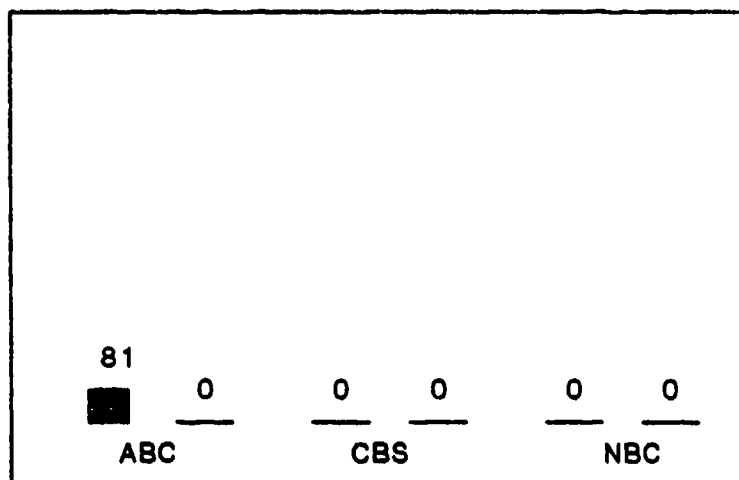


The number of words spoken for and against U.S. Policy on the Vietnam War on the three networks. Opinion of presidential candidates is not included. Data presented were extracted from news programs broadcasted from Sep-Nov 1968 at 7:00-7:30 p.m.

SOURCE: Edith Efron, The News Twister, 1971.

"Equal....?"

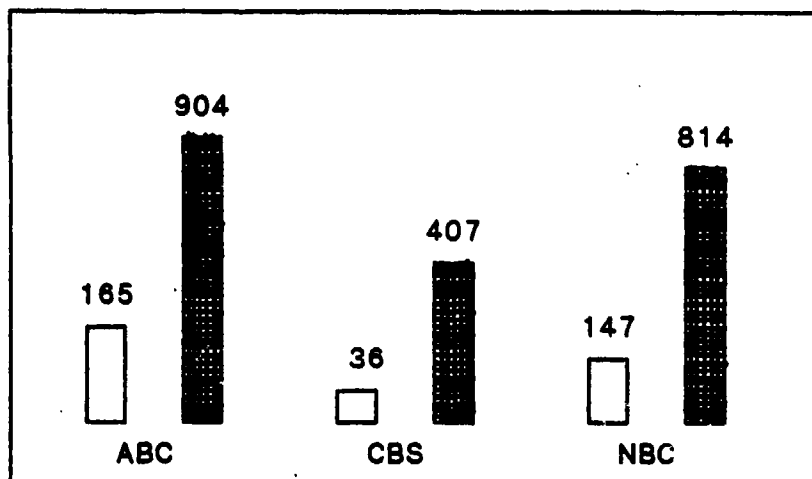
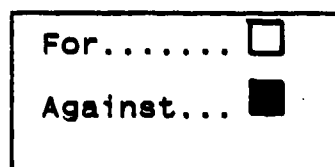
For.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Against...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



The number of words spoken for and against the Vietcong on the three networks combined.

SOURCE: Edith Efron, The News Twister, 1971.

## The News Twisters



The number of words spoken for and against U.S. Policy on the Vietnam War on the three networks. Opinion of presidential candidates is not included. Data presented were extracted from news programs broadcasted from Sep-Nov 1968 at 7:00-7:30 p.m.

SOURCE: Edith Efron, The News Twister, 1971.

**APPENDIX E - RESULTS OF ROPER POLL ON TELEVISION**

## APPENDIX E

Results of the 1959, Roper Poll on television.

### Data presented for response.

(1) Rate the quality of the job being done by social institutions.

<u>INSTITUTIONS</u>	<u>EXCELLENT TO GOOD</u>	<u>FAIR TO POOR</u>	<u>NO OPINION</u>
Schools	64%	26%	10
Newspapers	64	30	6
TV Stations	57	32	9
Local Government	44	43	13

(2) If only one could be kept, which communications medium would you most want to save.

<u>MEDIUM</u>	<u>RESPONSE</u>
Television	42%
Newspapers	32
Radio	19
Magazines	4
No Opinions	3

SOURCE: J. Fred MacDonald, Television and the Red Menace, p. 148.

**APPENDIX F - VIETNAM NEWS RELEASE GUIDELINES**

## APPENDIX F

### VIETNAM INFORMATION RELEASE GUIDELINES

1. Future plans, operations, or strikes.
2. Information on or confirmation of Rules of Engagement.
3. Amounts of ordnance and fuel moved by support units or on hand in combat units (ordnance includes weapons or weapons systems).
4. During an operation, unit designations and troop movements, tactical deployments, name of operation and size of friendly forces involved.
5. Intelligence unit activities, methods of operation, or specific locations.
6. Exact number and type of casualties or damage suffered by friendly units.
7. Number of sorties and the amount of ordnance expended on strikes outside RVN.
8. Information on aircraft taking off for strikes, enroute to, or returning from target area. Information on strikes while they are in progress.
9. Identity of units and locations of air bases from which aircraft are launched on combat operations.
10. Number of aircraft damaged or any other indicator of effectiveness or ineffectiveness of ground antiaircraft defenses.
11. Tactical specifics, such as altitudes, course, speeds, or angle of attack. (General descriptions such as "low and fast" may be used.)
12. Information on or confirmation of planned strikes which do not take place for any reason, including bad weather.
13. Specific identification of enemy weapons systems utilized to down friendly aircraft.
14. Details concerning downed aircraft while SAR operations are in progress.
15. Aerial photos of fixed installations.

Source: Rules Governing Public Release of Military Information (31 October 1966 & 19 March 1967).

**APPENDIX G - POLL RESULTS ON U.S. PROGRESS IN VIETNAM**

# APPENDIX G

In November 1967, just before Tet and in February 1968, just after it, the Gallup Poll asked Americans the following question:

"Do you think the U.S. and its allies are losing ground in Vietnam, standing still, or making progress?"

	Nov '67'	Feb '68'
Losing	8%	23%
Standing Still	33%	38%
Making Progress	50%	33%
No Opinion	9%	6%

Source: Steven Cohen, Vietnam: Anthology and Guide to a Television History, 1963, p.219.

APPENDIX H - COMPARISON OF KHE SANH TO DIENBIENPHU

# APPENDIX H

	<u>DIENBIENPHU</u>	<u>KHE SANH</u>
Distance From Friendly Bases AirField	100+ miles unusable	12 miles usable (C-123)
External Artillery Support	none	175MM. Guns (From two locations)
Available daily tactical combat aircraft	100	1,500
Average Incoming Rounds (Daily)	2,000+	150
Aircraft Losses	62	6-7 (Excluding Helicopters with 18 damaged)
Aerial Resupply (daily)	100 tons	161 + (Excluding Helicopter support)
How replacements arrived	Parachute	Fixed Wing Aircraft and Helicopter
Evacuation of Wounded	None	Helicopter
Enemy efforts after First Ground Attack	Continuous	4 Assault and the probes
Average Air Combat Sorties (Daily)	22	300
Average Heavy Bomber Sorties (Daily)	None	45-50
Passengers Airlanded/Evacuated via Cargo Aircraft	0/0	2,676/1,574 (Helicopter passengers not included).
Duration of the Battle	13 Mar 8 May 1954	21 Jan - 1 Apr 1968

NOTE 1 - The highest recorded total of incoming enemy rounds at Khe Sanh was 1,307, well below the daily average for Dienbienphu.

At Dienbienphu the French occupied an area of low ground and the Vietminh controlled the high country surrounding that ground. At Khe Sanh the American base was on a plateau and the high ground was held by American Forces throughout.

Source: Peter Braestrup, Big Story, vol. 1. 1977. p.347.

**APPENDIX I - MEMBERS OF THE SIDLE PANEL**

## APPENDIX I

### MEMBERS OF THE SIDLE PANEL

Winant Sidle, Major General, USA, Retired, Chairman

Brent Baker, Captain, USN

George Kirschenbauger, Colonel, USA

Fred C. Lash, Major, USMC

James Major, Captain, USN

Robert O'Brien, Colonel, USAF, Deputy Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

Keyes Beech

Scott M. Cutlip

John T. Halbert

Billy Hunt

A.J. Langguth

Wendell S. Merick

Richard S. Salant

Barry Zorthian

SOURCE: Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on  
the Military and Media, Battle Line, 1985.

**APPENDIX J - RECOMMENDATIONS OF SIDLE PANEL**

## APPENDIX J

### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SIDLE PANEL

#### Recommendation 1:

That public affairs planning for military operations be conducted concurrently with operational planning. This can be assured in the great majority of cases by implementing the following:

- a. Review all joint planning documents to assure that JCS guidance in public affairs matters is adequate.
- b. When sending implementing order to Commander in Chief in the field, direct CINC planners to include consideration of public information aspects.
- c. Inform the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) of an impending military operation at the earliest possible time. This information should appropriately come from the Secretary of Defense.
- d. Complete the plan, currently being studied, to include a public affairs planning cell in OJCS to help ensure adequate public affairs review of CINC plans.
- e. Insofar as possible and appropriate, institutionalize these steps in written guidance or policy.

#### Recommendation 2:

When it becomes apparent during military operational planning that news media polling provides the only feasible means of furnishing the media with early access to an operation, planning should provide for the largest possible press pool that is practical and minimize the length of time the pool will be necessary before "full coverage" is feasible.

#### Recommendation 3:

That, in connection with the use of pools, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend to the Secretary of Defense that he study the matter of whether to use a pre-established and constantly updated accreditation or notification list of correspondents in case of a military operation for which a pool is required or the establishment of a news agency list for use in the same circumstances.

#### Recommendation 4:

That a basic tenet governing media access to military operations should be voluntary compliance by the media with security guidelines or ground rules established and issued

by the military. These rules should be as few as possible and should be worked out during the planning process for each operation. Violations would mean exclusion of the correspondent(s) concerned from further coverage of the operation.

**Recommendation 5:**

Public Affairs planning for military operations should include sufficient equipment and qualified military personnel whose function is to assist correspondents in covering the operation adequately.

**Recommendation 6:**

Planners should carefully consider media communications requirements to assure the earliest feasible availability. However, these communications must not interfere with combat and combat support operations. If necessary and feasible, plans should include communications facilities dedicated to the news media.

**Recommendation 7:**

Planning factors should include provisions for intra- and inter-theater transportation support of the media.

**Recommendation 8:**

To improve media-military understanding and cooperation.

a. CJCS should recommend to the Secretary of Defense that a program be undertaken by ASD(PA) for top military public affairs representatives to meet with news organization leadership, to include meetings with individual news organizations, on a reasonably regular basis to discuss mutual problems, including relationships with the media during military operations and exercises. This program should begin as soon as possible.

b. Enlarge programs already underway to improve military understanding of other media via public affairs instruction in service schools, to include media participation when possible.

c. Seek improved media understanding of the military through more visits by commanders and line officers to news organizations.

d. CJCS should recommend that the Secretary of Defense host at an early date a working meeting with representatives of the broadcast news media to explore the special problems of ensuring military security when and if there is real-time or near real-time news media audiovisual coverage of a battlefield and, if special problems exist, how they can best be dealt with consistent with the basic principle set forth at the beginning of this section of the report.

**APPENDIX K - PRESS POOL GROUND RULES**

## APPENDIX K

### PRESS POOL GROUND RULES

1. You have been selected to participate as member of the DoD National Media Pool. The following ground rules will protect the security of the operation and the safety of the troops involved, while allowing you the greatest permissible freedom and access in covering the story as representatives of all U.S. media.
2. You may not mention to anyone the fact that the pool has been activated.
3. You may not file stories or otherwise attempt to communicate with any individual about the operation until stories and all other material (film, sound bites, etc.) have been pooled with other pool members. This pooling may take place at a pool member meeting during or immediately following the operation. You will be expected to brief other pool members concerning your experiences. Detailed instructions on filing will be provided to you by your military escorts at an appropriate time.
4. You must remain with the escort officers at all times, until released--and follow their instructions regarding your activities. These instructions are not intended to hinder your reporting, and are given only to facilitate movement of the pool and ensure troop safety.
5. Failure to follow these ground rules may result in your expulsion from the pool.
6. Your participation in the pool indicates your understanding of these guidelines and your willingness to abide by them.
7. Additional ground rules developed by the news organizations within the pool are attached.

Attachment  
As stated.

**To: Members of the Pentagon News Media Pool**

**Re: Pool Operations**

Representatives of the news organizations in the pool have adopted the following rules for pool operations:

1) The pool is non-competitive pool. This means that all participants must share their reporting and photos on a timely basis.

Correspondents will share their pooled information at the scene of the operation. Photographers will make their film available by turning over their film to wire service participants.

2) Pool members should seek the widest possible coverage of the military operation. This will require pool members assign themselves in a appropriate manner. If needed, pool members should draw straws or adopt some other method of allocating assignments.

3) The wire services undertake to transmit the newspaper pool's news report.

**APPENDIX L - SUMMARY OF MEDIA POOL EXERCISES**

## APPENDIX L

1. The first media pool exercise. In April 85, was staged for 5 days in conjunction with exercise universal trek 85 in Honduras. That exercise was not entirely successful since the existence of the pool was disclosed publicly before it departed Washington and there was a delay in filing press messages off the experience for both the DoD and the media.

2. The second exercise was at Fort Campbell, Ky, in September 85, with a duration of 24 hours. At Ft. Campbell, the media pool covered an air assault brigade's field training exercise, double eagle. That media pool exercise was designed to test both the secrecy of the pool's deployment and revised filing procedures for the media's products (print messages, video tapes, audio tapes and photography). Secrecy was maintained for approximately 14 hours until, as planned, the Secretary of Defense announced the deployment of the pool. All press messages and other media products were filed in a satisfactory and timely manner.

3. The third exercise occurred on 10 and 11 Dec 85, in conjunction with the Navy and Marine Corps exercise kernal usher 86-1, off the southern coast of California. The twelve member pool was flown from Andrews AFB, MD, to MCAS El Toro, CA, and from there to the flagship of Amphibious Squadron Three, off the coast of San Clemente Island. There they were briefed on the upcoming exercise by both the Amphibious Task Force Commander and the Landing Force Commander. After the briefings the pool split up and members were flown to other vessels to observe the landing which was about to commence. After the assault, the pool members were reassembled aboard the flagship to prepare their stories. The messages were planned to be released after all landing objectives were secured, but after reviewing the stories, the Amphibious Task Force Commander determined they could be transmitted early if one reference to an upcoming event was removed for OPSEC purposes. The pool agreed, the reference was removed and the messages were filed seven hours and thirty minutes ahead of schedule. Early on 11 Dec, the video and audio tapes and exposed still photographic film were flown by helicopter to the JIB at MCAS El Toro for pick-up by the media organization representatives. The third exercise of the pool remained secret. As planned, for over 28 hours; the total exercise lasted 45 hours. This exercise required more transportation than in the past in order to move pool members to several locations to more thoroughly cover the exercise -- a very valid requirement. It also identified a technical problem when the pool's radio reporter was unable to record interviews on board ship because of electrical (RF) interference.

4. Media pool number 4 was exercised on 1-2 Aug 86 at twenty-nine palms, CA., covering USCINCCENT Exercise Gallant Eagle 86. The pool deployed from Andrews AFB, MD, to USCINCCENT's field command at March AFB, CA., where they were briefed by General Crist (USCINCCENT) and his staff. General Crist used the opportunity to elaborate on USCINCCENT's mission, capabilities, and combat readiness. The following morning the pool members were flown to twenty-nine palms, observed a joint service fire control exercise, returned to March AFB where they prepared and filed their stories, and then departed, returning to Washington. Media pool number 4 was notable for several reasons: It was the first pool to include (2) women; It transmitted 3 pool reports to the Pentagon in just over one hour each; and it was a day-time activation/assembly. The exercise ran for 23 hours and security held as planned for 20 hours.

5. The fifth exercise of the media pool was on 11-12 Feb 87 at Ft. Bragg, NC, and Honduras. The pool deployed to Ft. Bragg, joined elements of the 82nd Airborne Division (Task Force I), and accompanied them to Honduras. After observing the initial element pool proceeded to Palmerola Air Base and was transported by van back to the landing zone to observe the second drop which was later canceled due to high winds. The pool returned to the JIB at Palmerola, filed its stories and returned to Andrews Air Force Base. Media pool number 5 lasted for 27 hours and security held, as planned, for 20 hours. This exercise was unusual in that it required more extensive coordination than previous exercises, involved linking up and deploying with the combat force and used telefax machines and foreign civilian telephone circuits to send media reports back to Washington. The three messages (Pool reports) from the JIB were received at the Pentagon in one hour and ten minutes; 22 minutes; and 32 minutes, respectively. The first message tied the previous fastest time and the second set of new record.

6. July 1987 - The first "real world" use of the pool. A 10-member pool deployed for nine days to cover Operation Earnest Will, the first U.S. Navy escort of reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers through the Persian Gulf. This was the first operational deployment of the pool to cover an actual military operation and secrecy was maintained for three days. This pool was able to report the reflagging of tankers and "broke" the story of the bridge hitting a mine in gulf waters while under escort. The pool functioned under "real world" conditions exactly as designed.

7. March 1988 - The first short-notice deployment of the pool. The military had approximately six hours to deploy a 10 member pool for two days to cover the U.S. Army's no-notice, emergency deployment readiness exercise to

Honduras, Golden Pheasant 88. This is considered the second operational pool deployment to cover what the media described as "A show of strength ordered by President Regan to counter what the White House called an invasion of Nicaraguan Forces." The standby news magazine photographer for the pool was not activated, but at the magazine's request, their photographer was allowed to join the pool in Honduras. One of the three newspapers on pool standby was not activated and later asked permission for a reporter to join the pool in Honduras at the paper's expense. Permission was granted, but when the reporter arrived in Honduras, she chose not to join the pool. The deployment was otherwise "routine."

SOURCE: Secretary Defense message dated 282127Z December 1988.

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